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**‘Becoming and being a student teacher:  
A psychoanalytical exploration of  
teacher fantasies.’**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Manchester Metropolitan  
University for the degree of  
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The Manchester Metropolitan University**

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## **Abstract**

Mass participation in education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions in our culture, where many adults pass through the process of teacher education. Those learning to teach implicitly draw on their subjective autobiographical experiences of school education in constructing their fantasies of what it means to become and be a teaching practitioner. Drawing upon contemporary psychoanalytical theory, this research carries out an exploration of how student teacher meanings and realities may have been constructed as pupils and continue to develop as student teachers. Through a first year unit of a teacher education programme, some student teachers are observed developing their analytical capacity in building authorship of their journey, through the production of a series of narrative accounts. These accounts act as temporal anchors, in which the researcher examines how the student teachers write themselves into their text, successively revising their teacher fantasies. Writing is seen as both a method of recording representations and an approach to develop professional practice. The research displays a Lacanian influence throughout, focusing upon how constructions offered by the student teachers will always be inevitably inadequate. The researcher progressively builds an awareness of the psychoanalytical relationship between herself and the 'object' of her research. The study affirms that a psychoanalytical approach can contribute to effective academic professional formation. The parallels drawn between the two fields of psychoanalysis and education as potential sites of conflict, provides a richer understanding of the role of anxiety in teacher education, in stimulating productive and generative learning outcomes, crucial to student teacher development. The study concludes by acknowledging both the teacher educator and student teacher as incomplete subjects and emotionality as an integral part of teacher education.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This study has been undertaken by a primary teacher educator with the aim of contributing to the wider field of teacher education and research in the area. The research is written from the perspective of a practising teacher educator and doctoral study researcher. The study is situated in a teacher education faculty of a large Higher Education Institution. It focuses on one of the units the student teachers undertake in their first year of study. The unit is entitled 'Teaching Studies – Becoming and Being a Teacher'.

Mass participation in education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions in our culture. Those engaged in teacher education implicitly draw on their subjective educational autobiographical experiences to make sense of their reality (Britzman, 2003 & 2006). The unit explores how student teachers progressively understand the demands of their profession, with a focus on the continual construction of their teacher fantasies of what it means to become and be a teaching practitioner. The student teachers attend to the notion of 'uncertainty' within the emotional world of teaching, as the unit constructs education as an interrupted and precarious journey fraught with emotional significance. Within the study, parallels are drawn between the two fields of psychoanalysis and education, as potential sites of conflict. Drawing upon psychoanalytical theory, specifically the work of Lacan (1977, 2006 & 2007), I, as the researcher, examine how six student teachers story themselves into narrative entries, which act as temporal anchors, creating new 'versions' of their teacher fantasies, whilst remaining aware, as the researcher, that the constructions offered will inevitably remain inadequate to all.

#### ***The wider field of teacher education***

Teacher education is subject to continuous restructuring to meet political priorities and resource constraints. Universities are regarded in neoliberal policy as producers of 'knowledge', enhancing individual and collective human capital, positively affecting economic growth and development (Patrik, 2013). Research is reported as becoming more selective and teaching increasingly driven by the experience of the student teacher, as a consumer of content and product (Barnett, 2005; Clegg, 2008;

Thomson & Gunter, 2011), as such universities are in crisis (Cowen, 2010). Within this vision, universities are regarded as one of the main agents of 'knowledge' production in a 'knowledge' society. Emphasis tends to be placed on the production of 'knowledge' that can be commercially exploited rather than on considering the ways in which engagement with 'knowledge' can enhance individual development, within sets of broadly conceived educational aims (Harris, 2005). The acceptance of marketisation and associated forms of neoliberal governance has led to the undermining of universities as "...independent sources of knowledge and inquiry..." (Kauppinen, 2012:192), with one of their primary functions being to raise productivity in order to survive (Harris, 2005).

The political decision to make the student population financially responsible for their university education has had major implications for the future of Higher Education Institutions. Given the increasing influence of consumerism, the distinct possibility exists that opening the sector to commercial markets will raise the importance of non-academic aspects of university experience, above that of the academic, thus changing forever how we define student experience (Brown & Murphy, 2012). Students who have 'bought' a degree, are less likely to 'sign up' to tackle difficult 'knowledge' and are more likely to expect higher costs to be reflected in higher grades. Grade inflation is an inevitable outcome of a consumerist model, since the value of the degree will increasingly be determined by grade comparisons between students and different degree programmes. Less attractive by far, will be the option to struggle with difficult 'knowledge', with its risk of lower grades on the lower slopes of understanding (Brown & Murphy, 2012).

The focus on employability within the sector, has led to a focus on technical competences (Edmond & Berry, 2014) with many Higher Education Institutions moving towards programmes where student teachers spend increasing amounts of time in school contexts, with an emphasis on skills, such as the 'School Direct' programme. In such programmes, schools play an increasingly prominent part in selecting applicants and manage 'training' arrangements, with only a minimum number of sessions in the university context. With greater emphasis on skills to ensure student teachers are 'classroom ready' when they enter their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year, teacher education has fallen victim to a technical rationalist



model (Biesta, 2007; Farley, 2013). This is reflected in political documentation, for example, the white paper: Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice, suggests the accreditation of teaching practitioners becomes the responsibility of schools (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016: online). Providing student teachers meet the expectations of the Higher Education Institution, embodied within the measureable structures put in place, for example, attendance, academic achievements, time in the school context, the teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online) and contributions within taught sessions etc. this unquestioningly equates to them becoming and being an 'Outstanding' teaching practitioner.

In more recent years, to counteract this shift, a focus on emotion as integral to student experience has heightened due to demands for the sector to promote employability, widening participation, educational productivity and student satisfaction and output (Schuck, Gordon & Buchanan 2008; Arthur, 2009; Clegg & Rowland, 2010; Woods, 2010; Gribble, Blackmore & Rahimi, 2015). Stakeholders are increasingly perceiving teacher education as a site for individual growth, encapsulating the personal alongside practical, recognising how emotion is required to enable student teachers to become analytically reflexive (Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Cramp et al. 2012; Ecclestone & Rawdin, 2016; Gilmore & Anderson, 2016). However, critics of the 'emotional turn' argue this maybe leading to an 'epistemology of the emotions' (Ecclestone & Rawdin, 2016). Yet there is an acceptance that the emotional dimensions of experience are inextricably linked (Storrs, 2012). Although emotional arousal does not automatically lead to learning, without it, people are not able to learn (Dirkx 2001). Gilmore & Anderson (2016) suggest a psychoanalytically informed approach, which attends to emotionality, is the most appropriate response to the shift within the sector. They affirm a link between emotion and learning by highlighting the way in which experiences of anxiety form a necessary grounding for productive learning outcomes, whilst illustrating how 'learning inaction' (Vince, 2014) can occur if teacher educators find themselves ill-equipped to 'hold' emotions effectively (Winnicott, 1965). In addition, they reassert the agency of teachers and students involved in scholarly relationships, attending to the emotive experiences of both. My development of the unit and the focus of this study is a response to the above. Although the study explores the experience of six student teachers, within

one unit, within one teacher education faculty, within one Higher Education Institution, the findings of the study are contributing towards generalised poignant and prominent concerns within the sector.

### ***The Higher Education Institution***

Similarly to many other Higher Education Institutions, the one in which this study is situated, has implemented structures to measure progress towards such stakeholder expectations as described previously, such as their 'Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment' (SLTA) developed and launched in 2014, in partnership with the Student Union. The SLTA strategy articulates six core principles. The principles, and the standards that support them, are said to "...incorporate both strategic design and operational requirements, and are the framework used on a regular basis to reflect upon and review the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in faculties, departments and programmes." (Higher Education Institution SLTA 2.3: online).

According to the Higher Education Institution's website, programme teams should use the SLTA confidence grid, to assess how well the principles and standards are reflected in programme design and delivery. Principle 2 outlines the Higher Education Institution will provide an innovative, flexible, enterprising and internationalised curriculum; one of the standards states programmes will enable "...students to develop their intellectual powers, creativity, independent judgement, critical self-awareness, imagination, and personal skills that will clearly identify them as [the Higher Education Institution's] graduates, global learners and as world class professionals." (Higher Education Institution SLTA 2.3: online). The SLTA strategy is an example of a structure in place, to which teacher educators are accountable. In part, depending upon the way in which you conceptualise, one could argue this study is an exploration of how a teacher education programme, may begin to change the way in which units are designed to enable student teachers to "...develop their intellectual powers, creativity, independent judgement, critical self-awareness, imagination..." This thesis suggests emotionality is an integral part of the teacher education experience for student teachers. To a certain extent, for any research to be 'granted' a voice within a particular field, its focus has to 'marry up' to stakeholder priorities.

### ***The unit – Becoming and Being a Teacher***

The study is situated within the first year Teaching Studies unit, for which I was the unit leader between 2013-2016. The term 'unit' is interchangeable with others such as, module/division/component/block, within different Higher Education Institutions. The ethos of the unit, places the student teachers' educational autobiographical experiences at its heart, constructing them as the greatest asset to their teacher education. Undoubtedly, the focus of this study continues to inform and influence changes to the unit, which continues to run to this present day, improving the quality of the student teachers' provision.

My intention as the unit leader was to create 'space' for the student teachers to explore how experiences continually influence existing and developing teacher fantasies, whilst unearthing existing tensions. The unit encourages the student teachers to attend to the 'uncertainty' of the emotional world of teaching, constructing teacher education as an interrupted and precarious journey, fraught with emotional significance. Garrett (2013) focused his work on how teacher education programmes have a tendency to attempt to address, confront, revisit, and refine student teachers' pasts. He recognised within his study, how narratives of education affect the way in which student teachers experience their teacher education. According to Garret, without the student teachers recognising the influence of their educational autobiographies, they run the risk of mistaking thoughtful practice with a reproduction of experiences of/in school contexts. The student teachers' stories, captured within the narrative entries, act as temporal anchors - an attempt to grasp a moment of 'certainty'. In doing so, the student teachers narrate "...a further part..." of their educational autobiographies, as life becomes "...enacted narratives..." (Macintyre, 1984: 208). These stories are 'fragments' of reality, unable to ever completely describe the restricted spatial confines of autobiographical narratives. From the outset, the student teachers were encouraged to embrace the 'unknown' and 'uncertainty' with purpose.

The 'space' was designed to enable the student teachers to move beyond a mute acceptance of the structures in place within teacher education, allowing them to progressively understand the demands of their chosen profession. The sessions captured stakeholder demands through the examination of 'texts'. Through my research, I found others have used psychoanalytic theory to explore meanings

produced in the convergence of teacher education and collaborative experiences of reading, for example, Lewkowich (2015) examined how literature can foster a productive engagement with student teachers' desires, fantasies and anxieties around teacher education. He provided two narrative accounts of shared encounters with fictional adolescence, where he explored the transferential attachments and projective identifications a group of student teachers developed towards the 'texts' they read. He stresses whilst the future necessarily remains 'uncertain', allowing student teachers to use the context of 'texts' to indirectly 'work through' their anxieties, provides a forum for the symbolization of desires which may otherwise have remained unvoiced (Lewkowich, 2015).

'Space' was created within the unit for 'reflexively' driven discussions, sandwiched between the production of the narrative entries. Questions such as: Can we truly represent ourselves and an other? Whose story is it? How do I offer an inadequate representation? became integral to the unit. When researching the concept of 'reflexivity', it became evident there was a need to forefront the politics of representation by making 'reflexivity' visible (Fine, 1994; Lather, 1993 & 1995). As part of the unit and the study, 'reflexivity' acts as a metaphorical bridge between the stories conveyed through the narrative and the readers' interpretation.

There were seven groups which undertook the unit, one of which I was the teacher educator for, for which six randomly selected student teachers unknowingly but consensually became participants in the study. In total, the student teachers experienced twenty sessions, of which seven were originally identified as opportunities for them to produce narrative entries, with two more added on as the unit/study progressed, discussed later in the thesis. The student teachers' assessments reflected the unit's distinct style of learning, although the student teachers' participation in the study had no bearing upon their academic achievements for the unit. The original opportunities for data collection are outlined below:

Session 2 - Who I am? (September 2015)

*The student teachers brought to the session a narrative account of their teacher fantasies – the teacher they thought they were already and that which they aspired to be. During the session, the student teachers attempted to look beyond the*

*outlined teacher fantasies to disrupt their interpretation and that of their peers.*

#### Session 4 - Biography and reflection (October 2015)

*The student teachers examined examples of 'texts' written by other teaching practitioners on why they became a teaching practitioner. The student teachers developed an understanding of how educational autobiographical writing revealed teacher fantasies.*

#### Session 6 - The contested profession (November 2015)

*The student teachers made connections to 'cultural myths' surrounding the teaching profession, noticing the ways in which teacher fantasies mirror some of these ideological perspectives. The student teachers contemplated stakeholder influence upon practice and teacher fantasies.*

#### Session 8 -The role of theory (November 2015)

*This session examined several learning theories challenging the student teachers expectations around 'knowledge' acquisition. The student teachers considered the influence exposure to this kind of 'knowing knowledge' has. They went onto disrupt the construct of 'theory', considering its place in their teacher fantasies and more broadly, teacher education.*

#### Session 14 - Reflection on practice (February 2016)

*Prior to this session, the student teachers had the opportunity to plan and teach a group of their peers, a lesson of their choice for an early years (3-5 years old) or primary (5-11 years old) year group. The session examined the value of evaluating practice, considering practical implications for children and teaching practitioners. The student teachers considered how evaluating practice has the potential to reveal something about their ideologies as well as shape/shift their teacher fantasies.*

#### Session 16 – Debate (February 2016)

*Prior to the session, the student teachers prepared to debate an issue surrounding behaviour management. By examining competing perspectives, the student teachers considered how 'factual texts' represent one 'version' of reality and how the act of*

*narration re-storied their teacher fantasies.*

## Session 18 - Text exploration (March 2016)

*The student teachers examined a 'fictional text' that represented teaching or/and teaching practitioners in some way, focusing on different 'themes' for discussion. They contemplated how their teacher fantasies shaped/shifted, through their examination.*

All of the student teachers, in each of the seven groups, completed the same unit, including the production of narrative entries. They submitted these to an electronic depository, which all involved within the unit (teacher educators and student teachers), could access but most importantly the authors themselves. The student teachers shared their unfolding stories with their peers, understanding the unit as socially and relationally constructed – a conscious act – an attempt to cultivate reciprocal relationships (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). The unit encouraged the student teachers to understand narration as entrenched within 'discourses' occupied. 'Discourse' is understood in this study as "...practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak..." (Foucault, 1972: 49). This means there can never be an unmediated access to reality and position outside of discourse. The narration through the unit, is not a 'window' into the 'real' world of 'real' student teachers. Instead, language is understood as a device or constructive tool for the creation of narrative entries, in this sense, there is no 'window' into the inner life of a person, for any 'window' filters through the glaze of language (Derrida, 1978).

## ***Psychoanalysis and education***

This study draws parallels between the two fields of psychoanalysis and education to explore the complexity of the student teachers' emotive response to the experience of teacher education. As a researcher, I am not a psychoanalyst and my purpose is not to subject myself to novice psychoanalysis, however, it is important to outline my understanding of the field. The fundamental premise of psychoanalysis is that the human psyche is composed of both conscious and unconscious elements (Lewkowich, 2015). The obscurity between conscious intention and unconscious desire means the student teachers can never reach any 'certainties' as to why they experience reality as they do. A psychoanalytical approach seeks to capture a

myriad of relations between the object world and relationships with self, others and 'knowledge'. I explore how experiences within both fields, inevitably evoke emotional reactions, exploring a connection to 'uncertainty'.

My first encounter with psychoanalytical theory was through the work of Deborah Britzman. Britzman's research explores the relationship between psychoanalysis and education, specifically teacher education. Her work predominantly responds to the work of Sigmund Freud as well as developments made by other contemporary authors since (Appel, 1996 & 1999; Briton, 1997; Robertson, 1997; Pitt, 2000; Todd, 2008). She explores fundamental Freudian concepts such as the psychological apparatus, the drives, the unconscious, the development of morality and transference, exploring their relevance for education. I began by focusing on Britzman's four types of 'knowing' and 'knowledge' teacher education structures normalise (2006). She presents the four conceptualisations of compartmentalisation of knowledge, pedagogy and content, knowledge and interests, theory and practice, of which influenced my development of the unit and my early writing. I moved onto her work around 'cultural myths', exploring how normative discourses powerfully reaffirm student teachers' educational autobiographies (2003). Within these discussions, she advocates an 'image' of teacher education as dialogic, encouraging the student teachers to understand that whilst the normative discourse is powerfully convincing, it is challengeable (2006).

Most predominant within the study, are the theoretical ideas of Jacques Lacan. Lacan (1977) saw the subject as a creator of and conditioned by ideology, yet discourses might be much harder to discern, categorise and resist. His theories offer thought-provoking explorations of subjectivity, language and insights into the unconscious. Within the discussion, I contemplate his ideas around subject identification, where against this sort of frame, the task of this study is not to seek 'truth' or a 'resolution' but rather to ask how the discursive formulations have taken shape (Brown & England, 2005) in the minds of student teachers, revealed through the data. For Lacan (1977), the human subject is always incomplete and self-identifications are captured in an 'image'. The premise any individual could construct a definite narrative account of their educational autobiography is flawed, insofar as history is dependent upon where it was told and how one perceives it. In this respect, it is the necessary failure of the narrative entries the student teachers produce, that

provide the motivation for them to continually re-write the story. In this sense, it is impossible to grasp reality and any attempt will inevitably alter it, grasping something different – a disturbed ‘version’. In attending to these issues, I consider Lacan’s (2006) concept of the Imaginary (a delusory mirror image that we have of ourselves) the Symbolic (the ideological apparatus that surrounds and engulfs us) and the Real (the world of ‘being’ - the unspeakable outside of language and resisting signification). I draw upon his notion of the Four Discourses (2007), where he articulates four ways of perceiving human interactions in a social world: Master (governance over others), University (institutions and how they deliver the Master’s messages), Hysteric (protesting and objecting to the Master), and Analyst (revolutionary ways of rebelling against the Master).

### ***Positionality and ethical considerations***

Throughout the later stages of my educational autobiography, I questioned how more traditional methods of research seemingly disregard nuanced and complex elements of social life. My experience as a student teacher and teacher educator have taught me that experiences, storytelling and emotions play a significant part in education, yet are often considered ‘messy’ and ‘uncontrollable’ - a barrier to producing objective and rational research. As a researcher, I am required to account for my presence within the study, as I can never consider myself as neutral. In accounting for my presence, I am not seeking to remove it for the purpose of an impossible objectivity, but to make allowance for it, as a necessary part of the narration (Dey, 1993; Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Brewer, 2000). The assumptions I make about the nature of reality, ‘knowledge’ and the status of ‘truth’, all have significant implications for my ethical responsibility (Stanley, 1996; Atkinson et al. 2001). All research involving human participants raises significant ethical concerns; I share the same responsibility to protect the student teachers from harm, as any other researcher. As with all studies, the justification lies in the belief it will ‘make a difference’ with the benefits accruing to both the individual and collective. These obligations move beyond simple adherence to a prescriptive list of requirements by an ethics board (Beynon, 2008) due to the involved nature of the researcher and participants.



Prior to the unit commencing, the six student teachers that became participants within the study were provisionally chosen. I felt it was important to do this prior to meeting them so any interaction with them, would not unconsciously influence whom I chose off the class list I was due to teach. At the end of the first session of the unit, the student teachers were invited to read the participant information and decide whether they consented to potentially unknowingly becoming part of the study. Providing the same six students consented, these became the participants, which they did. If this was not the case, I would have selected however many to replace them. Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain whether the student teachers gave true informed consent, as it is impossible to know whether they fully understood the nature of the study and were able to predict the impact or the risks/benefits of a contextualised commitment.

The fundamental premise of the unit is that the student teachers will be encouraged to embrace the emotionality of their educational experiences. This includes the recall of events from their educational autobiographies, which, as expected, evoked emotive responses, particularly when they were interpreting encounters with the 'unknown' and 'uncertain'. It was impossible as the researcher, to anticipate to what extent this experience would affect the participants. What could be constituted as risk was more likely to be indirect than direct and inevitably subjective. The potential risks/benefits were inadvertently derived from the 'uncontrollable' rather than from my intentions as the researcher. Thus, it was important to have a heightened awareness this would occur and for the student teachers to do the same, as an integral part of the unit itself; this extended to the other teacher educators and student teachers in the other six groups, as part of my continued role as unit leader.

The act of storying autobiographical experiences is an intervention into the student teachers' lives (Stanley, 1996). This purposeful interruption was one shared with myself as their teacher educator as well as their peers. Their awareness of others' access to their shaping/shifting stories, may, depending on how the unit progressed, have resulted in the student teachers deciding they were uncomfortable with these being 'public' (Dominice, 2000; Gill & Goodson, 2011). Unfortunately, as the act of narration was key to the unit's progression and formed part of their assessment, the student teachers would not have been able to withdraw their participation entirely without it having a bearing upon their success for their first academic year, but they

could have done from the study – none of them did. I know the narrative entries offered will have been ‘tided up’ due to their awareness of others. Due to the nature of the unit/study, the production of ‘versions’ of themselves and their teachers fantasies were appropriate and expected, considering the study is situated within the psychoanalytic field.

Alongside the student teachers’ ‘versions’ and those constructed by their peers, I have considered to what extent I have authority to represent the student teachers’ stories. Inevitably, I too constructed a ‘version/s’ of their reality, which they may not acknowledge or even recognise. There is potential for the student teachers to be affected, not only by what is experienced and included within the study, but by what has been left out. The use of my ‘version/s’ elevate the researcher’s interpretation, making it difficult for the participants to sustain alternative articulations. I cannot defend that as the researcher, I have the potential to exploit my authorial position, by imposing interpretations on the student teachers’ data (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Wolcott, 1990; Stanley, 1996). I attempted to account for this, by completing the analysis in-between each data collection opportunity, prior to the student teachers discussing their narrative entries. The student teachers, from the outset, understood that by submitting to the online depositories, their data became ‘public’ in the sense that the teacher educator and their peers would have access to it. This ‘exposure’ of the data, enabled the student teachers to gain valuable differing and competing ‘versions’ of reality captured within the narrative entries. Thus, the student teachers still had a right to self-definition but from the outset had an awareness all involved would present disturbed ‘versions’ of their reality. It is my hope my ‘final’ interpretations are not considered by the student teachers, as an uninvited intrusion into their lives, which strips them of some element of freedom to make sense of their experiences (Josselson, 1996).

The student teachers, to my knowledge, remain unaware of whose data was used and to some extent of their involvement in subsequent publications. I protected the student teachers and context by removing identifying information, using pseudonyms and altering non-relevant details. I am aware published accounts may potentially offend and distress those whom I have written about, if the student teachers are able to identify themselves (Ellis, 1995). I acknowledge I am unable to give absolute guarantees the identities of the student teachers and context will remain hidden,

after all the content of the narrative entries is inadvertently personal. As the study is overt, due to the nature of its funding and the requirement for it to be completed as part of my ongoing professional development, colleagues may be able to identify the source of the data after publication.

### ***Structure - processing time and narrative***

Towards the end of this introductory chapter, I outline the chapter overview, which reveals the structure of the thesis. Originally, it was my intention to structure the thesis in chronological order, according to the original production of each chapter, to compliment the 'journey' feel of the unit. However, in the final months of the thesis' production, I came to the realisation that to present a linear unproblematic structure to a thesis situated within the psychoanalytical field would be problematic in itself. For the remainder of this chapter, I outline the work of Ricoeur (1981, 1984 & 1987) on processing time and narrative, to provide the reader with an understanding of the rationale behind the structure.

Ricoeur (1981, 1984 & 1987) discusses the interplay of understanding through 'hermeneutics' (the theory of interpretation), which is often interconnected with the term 'phenomenology' (the logic of the world as experienced). Ricoeur (1984 & 1987) argued the passage of time cannot be described as a sequence of events, features or stages. Instead, time needs to be understood as mediated by narrative accounts of transitions, relying on interpretations, which cannot be seen as comprising phenomenological features (Ricoeur, 1984). Time and narrative are mutually constitutive whereby "...time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence..." (Ricoeur, 1984: 52). It was his belief that our understanding of experience is translated into explanations; these explanations condition subsequent understandings. Understanding develops continuously over time, forever susceptible to temporal disturbance (Brown & McNamara, 2011). Our experience within any referential framework of time is thereby a function of the stories we tell, which in turn, is a function of our sense of temporal existence and how we experience life unfolding; the objects that populate them move in and out of significance, changing composition. Time is not a function of phenomena perceived by everyone in the same way. The individual can only

access reality through their capacity to tell stories about it, stories which inevitably build something of them into the reality they seek to portray (Brown & McNamara, 2011).

Within the study, the student teachers' fantasies are examined through the filter of their conceptualisations, with anchorage being offered in the form of my perspective on the context within which the conceptualisations are taking place, a perspective influenced by my experiences as a student teacher, within my educational autobiography. In teacher education, for example, we mythologise through 'cultural myths', which become socially constructed phenomenologies, serving as 'temporal anchors' for the educational field. These 'temporal anchors' taint reality and subsequent representations offered through narratives. Thus, conditioned by discourses surrounding them, where any notion of an underlying 'truth' is the 'cultural myth' that is told at the time (Barthes, 1972). At any point in time, the narrative provides a filter into our interpretation of experience. The narration of autobiographical accounts evoke emotions and as such, our past is accessed through particular filters, through which we often feel uncomfortable; this maybe because we no longer connect with the issues presented within them. Past struggles are preserved within the narrative, which may have been resolved or prompt awareness of new ones revealed through analysis. Brown (1996) discusses the creation of meaning within practitioner research, as being analogous to how meaning arises within contemporary understandings of language. He suggests the production of pieces of writing over time, influences the meaning derived from successive narration. No individual piece has meaning in itself but rather depends on its relation to other pieces (Brown & Roberts, 2000). Subsequently, any attempt by a researcher to define a starting point, is in itself problematic but necessary. It is impossible to 'map out' a study such as this; any attempted narration can be revisited and reorganised, positing any newly supposed causal sequence, as "The psychoanalytical view of time is that it does not progress in the linear way..." (Kay, 2003: 159).

Ricoeur's (1981) theory on transitional narratives, suggests the function of narratives offered may undergo multiple transitions. Ricoeur offers criteria in establishing 'truths', a concept that is unavoidably problematic for this study. Despite this, to a certain extent, to engage with reality, there is a requirement to use such referential

frameworks to make momentary sense of phenomena. The criteria assisted me, as I began to consider what I would constitute as data for the study. Ricoeur's criteria comprises of the data being accountable in language, having a 'psychical reality' and be part of a story that 'fits' within the narrative. For phenomenon to enter into a field of analysis, it must be something capable of being said, therefore, it must be accountable in language; the verification of data relies on an examination of the sincerity of that being said. In the case of this study, the student teachers continuously authored their story of the unit, whilst simultaneously sharing their narration with others. Their awareness built into the study an element of inter-subjectivity. What was 'left out' was potentially as significant as what was included. There was no simple transmission from author to researcher and there were inevitably difficulties in maintaining text integrity with the author's intentions, to ensure the narrative was in some way representative. The narrative entries needed to point to a 'psychical reality' in contrast to material reality. This study hypothesises the student teachers were guided in their current actions, by their understanding of experience in their educational autobiographies, which constituted and constructed their reality. Therefore, the veracity of their belief is irrelevant because "...what is psychologically relevant is what a subject makes of his fantasies..." (Ricoeur, 1981: 253). Through their reflections of the unit, the student teachers inserted events from their educational autobiographies into a story, to serve as a 'narrative function', guided by thoughts rather than 'certainties' and external 'truth'. In doing so, the narrative entries were constructions of thoughts into a story that appeared to hold together – one 'version'. It is impossible to be able to verify the narrative entries in any sense; I assumed part sincerity from them. The narrative function is constructed in a specific discursive style, where perceived expectations prevail. In doing so, the story is shaped/shifted by the supposed context and with it, the expectations the context implies.

### ***The thesis – chapter outline***

Below is an outline of each chapter. In light of the above discussion, the chapters have not been ordered chronologically, however I believe it is important for the reader to have an understanding of when they were written to appreciate the 'journey' of the study, indicated after the chapter titles. Whilst some of the chapters

are articulated more formally, some of the earlier chapters are presented in a more informal style due to the author's positionality and context of the discussion.

## **Chapter 2: Sites of conflict – psychoanalysis and teacher education (Originally written 2016)**

Within this chapter, parallels are drawn between the two fields of psychoanalysis and teacher education as sites of conflict, offering an implicit justification for why the psychoanalytical field was the most appropriate choice for this study. I draw upon the work of Freud and Britzman, exploring how experiences in an 'uncertain' profession inevitably evoke emotional responses, particularly the feeling of anxiety. Any attempt to explore the student teachers' fantasies, requires access to an emotional world, which is impossible to interpret in any accurate way; any attempt to do so inevitably affects understanding. I also introduce the work of Lacan, to gain a sense of why a gap, a feeling of 'loss' or 'lack', a desire for 'something else' exists for student teachers.

## **Chapter 3: My story (Originally written 2015)**

This chapter temporarily anchors the start of the researcher's journey through the presentation of a story – the story of becoming and being a student teacher, teaching practitioner, teacher educator and researcher in the field of teacher education. It enables the reader to gain an insight into my sliding positionality as the researcher. Contents of this chapter are referred to elsewhere within the thesis, noticeably the struggles chapter, in conjunction with the student teachers' data.

## **Chapter 4: Knowing knowledge (Originally written 2015)**

I began my research journey by examining data from a focus group discussion with year two student teachers (academic year 2014-2015), who were asked to reflect upon their experiences of their first year of teacher education. This data was collected, to enable me to gain a sense of what was 'lacking' in the current unit, in order to established how it could evolve. The emphasis was upon preconceptions the student teachers had about the types of 'knowledge' they expected to encounter within teacher education. The chapter is structured according to the work of Britzman (2006) who discusses four types of 'knowledge' and 'knowing' teacher education

structures normalise; compartmentalisation of knowledge, pedagogy and content, knowledge and interests, theory and practice.

### **Chapter 5: Cultural Myths (Originally written 2016)**

This chapter contains a re-examination of the focus groups data from the previous chapter (academic year 2014-2015). The discussion progresses the story on from Britzman's (2006) constructs of 'knowledge' and begins to uncover some of the 'cultural myths' (2003) contributing to the student teachers' expectations of their teacher education and fantasies.

### **Chapter 6: Teaching studies – a Lacanian lens (Originally written 2017)**

In seeking to problematize my understanding of the student teachers' journey, I turned to Lacan's (2007) theory of the Four Discourses to explore the notions of subjectivity, language and insights into the unconscious. The use of Lacan's theory is not to be interpreted as a 'remedy' or 'cure' to struggles experienced and explored through the unit/study, but offers an alternative perspective to challenge existing understandings and generate new ones.

### **Chapter 7: Struggles (Originally written 2015 - 2017)**

The chapter begins by outlining the various stages of analysis and provides the reader with 'character anchors', written by the participants themselves. The rest of the chapter is structured around Lacan's theory of the Four Discourses (2007), using theoretical ideas discussed in the previous chapter (6) and data from the student teachers' narrative entries as well as parallels within my story (chapter 3).

### **Chapter 8: A contribution to 'knowledge' (Originally written 2018)**

This final chapter reminds the reader of the premise that any attempt to construct a definite narrative account is flawed and inevitably dependent upon who, when, where, why it is read and how the reader perceives it. I reflect upon the necessary failure of the thesis and consider how this provides motivation for me to continually re-write the story into future research. I outline this study's 'contribution to knowledge' within the fields of psychoanalysis and teacher education.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Sites of conflict - psychoanalysis and teacher education**

**Originally written 2016 - 2017**

The fundamental premise of psychoanalysis is that the human psyche is composed of both conscious and unconscious elements (Lewkowich, 2015). The obscurity between conscious intention and unconscious desire means the student teachers who feature within this study, can never reach any 'certainties' as to why they experience reality as they do. Anxiety, from a psychoanalytical perspective, is an entirely 'normal' response to education, arising as it does from a product of tensions caused by an individual emotively responding to an experience and laced with expectations from a supposed other. This chapter initially focuses on the work of Sigmund Freud, arguably one of the most influential figures within the psychoanalytical field. Freud's work underpins Britzman's and the Lacanian psychoanalytical ideas that shape this study. The struggle I have felt in attempting to articulate psychoanalytical theories results from the profound difficulty I have experienced in reading these key authors. For example, I have always been cautious about articulating and applying Lacanian theory in such a way, that it would seemingly streamline or present an uncomplicated understanding. In using Lacanian terms such as 'subject', 'object', 'agent', 'other' etc. I am aware of the dangers of oversimplifying concepts that have multiple meanings. It is not my intention to provide an extensive review of literature, merely to explore how experiences within both psychoanalysis and education, inevitably evoke emotional reactions, specifically anxiety. By exploring connections to 'uncertainty', I will be drawing parallels between the two fields as sites of conflict.

Freud argued cognition and emotions are inseparable; the force of their interaction makes learning both possible and difficult (Freud, 1914). He described the unconscious as "...the realm of memory traces of things..." (1917 reprinted 2005: 216) and "...discernible to us only under the conditions of dreaming and neurosis..." (1917 reprinted 2005: 70). In his early work, he believed the cure for neuroses lay in providing accurate 'knowledge', as a correction to 'faulty' answers to questions, which perplexed the child and continued to plague the adult. However, such



conscious communication failed to have impact, thus Freud's attention turned to the patient's resistance to unconscious material.

Freud (1920) explained how initially psychoanalytic technique had been an 'art of interpretation', where the analyst's communication of unconscious material was crucial to the patient. Freud (1913) postulated that interpretation of the unconscious was not possible without symbolizing and narrating the affected experience – a process he called 'working through'. This process involved putting together pieces of one's life, however incomplete, to make meaning, creating a new subject position, enabling him/her to interpret reality rather than comply with it. Viewed through such a lens, facilitating a 'holding environment' is partially contingent upon engagement with 'working through' the patient's emotional world (Shim, 2014). According to Freud, the difficulty in narrating the affected experience is the demand for narrating without "...knowing in advance either the outcome or even the utility..." (Britzman, 1999: 4). The patient's resistance brings into the frame the phenomenon of transference, where it is the patient's engagement with their resistances, rather than their conscious acknowledgement of them, which ensures the continuing mobilisation of treatment:

"The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. Thus, he acquires no sense of conviction of the correctness of the construction that has been communicated to him. He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past ... The ratio between what is remembered and what is reproduced varies from case to case. The physician cannot as a rule spare his patient this phase of the treatment. He must get him to re-experience some portion of his forgotten life, but must see to it, on the other hand, that the patient retains some degree of aloofness, which will enable him, in spite of everything, to recognise that what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past." (Freud, 1920: 18–19)

Freud became dissatisfied with his efforts to reach any sort of 'truth'; he became disheartened by the 'uncertainty' of whether the patient would decide to accept/reject

his interpretations. Even when he came close to reaching any agreeable 'story' about their experiences, he felt there was no reliable change in the patient's perceived suffering (Freud, 1914). For Freud, what became most significant to the psychoanalytical experience was not what mattered to the patient and whether they agreed/disagreed with his interpretation, but rather the emotional significance.

At the core of psychoanalysis, is the idea that past-unresolved conflicts or ways of relating are projected into situations in the present; "...new editions of old conflicts..." (Freud, 1968: 454). Thus, Freud developed his notion of screen memories, which he defined as "...residues of childhood recollections..." (1966: 321) noting "...some of these screen memories dealing with events later in life owe their importance to a connection with experiences in early youth which have remained suppressed..." (Page 320). Freud's (1914) theory of transference, highlights the importance of such relationships. He admitted not knowing which affected him more - what the teacher taught or what the teacher was like - which provoked the feeling of 'love':

"We courted them or turned our backs on them, we imagined sympathies and antipathies in them which probably had no existence, we studied their characters, on theirs we formed or misformed our own. They called up our fiercest opposition and forced us to complete submission; we peered into their little weakness, and took pride in their excellences, their knowledge and justice... we felt great affection for them if they gave us any ground for it..." (Cited in Britzman, 2009: 81)

When the student teachers enter teacher education, the familiarity associated with the context, creates conditions for transference. The student teachers' reliving of emotions associated with teaching practitioners in their educational autobiographies, does not equate to the same as the event experienced during temporal moments in time. If the teacher educator/student teacher relationship continues to orientate around normative discourses, constructed as linear and unproblematic – without struggle – there will be no shift towards anything other than what is continuously experience. When student teachers feel familiarity in the way in which they are experiencing an educational experience, their unconscious is animated without it being symbolised.

Britzman (2004 & 2011), when discussing Freud's concept of screen memories in the context of education, explains how psychical events, which the teaching

practitioner may not consciously be aware of, become part of curriculum 'knowledge' and pedagogical choices educators make, due to their emotive state, as they transfer unresolved childhood conflicts to the current context. For Anna Freud (1930) this should be of fundamental importance for educators, as their familiarity within the context makes them susceptible to the re-enactment of childhood memories. The dynamics this creates has an impact on relationships established, yet for these to be effective relationships, the analyst (teacher educator) needs to be able to distinguish what feelings and thoughts are their own and encourage the analysand (student teacher) to do the same, cultivating aloofness (Freud, A. 1930). The analysand is required to maintain sufficient distance, with the analyst's aid, in an attempt to appreciate emotional investments within the enactment and its form. The only way one can develop any capacity to 'know knowledge' is in attempts to grasp the emotional significance of experiences, operating through fragmentations of the unconscious, which present as conflicts; "...a process of the actualisation of unconscious wishes and desires linked to childhood experiences [that] re-emerge and are experienced as immediate..." (Kennedy, 2010: 191). The relationship between analyst/analysand is one in which a degree of trespassing onto the grounds of the other as well as the 'unknown', is crucial.

For psychoanalysis, the 'unknown' and the 'uncertainty' it generates are the human condition, whereas for teacher education, 'uncertainty' appears as a challenge to normative discourses where emotions are unrecognised. Britzman (1998) describes 'difficult knowledge' as "...learning from an event..." (Page 117), explaining that when pedagogy challenges the normative "...it has the potential to 'unleash'...unpopular things..." (2011: 78). As education is often constructed as 'static' and 'fixed', "...already out there, a stability that can be assumed..." (Britzman, 2003: 29), the subject is unprepared for 'uncertainty' and the emotionality evoked. In the context of education, the emotion of anxiety interrupts normative discourses and becomes a space in which the teaching subject must decide. The incongruent moments, signalled by anxiety and resonating through repression, might facilitate a fleeting consciousness, fostering a momentary awareness, in which the teaching subject might push against the normative discourses of becoming and being or acquiesce to it. The spaces between 'performing' as a teaching subject within normative discourse and the subject's teacher fantasy are significant. They illustrate

not only the teaching subject's desire to be 'something else', but the ways in which they find themselves enacting other teaching subjects, which compete with their teacher fantasies, leading to moments of realization, which emanate from conflict (Janzen, 2013). Within such a site of conflict, there is space for what Britzman (1992) terms 'creative agency', for making conscious decisions about how to respond to normative discourses and teacher fantasies. Within teacher education, the 'uncertain' and 'unknown' remain subverted and anxiety repressed, in order to maintain recognisability as a teaching practitioner. The student teachers, while being situated discursively within the subjectifying forces of becoming and being a teaching practitioner, engage with 'difficult knowledge' whilst remaining constituted by and within the normative discourses predominant within teacher education.

Britzman's (2013) insights into the difficulties involved in encountering the emotional world, is challenging to conceptualise because what is unconscious is accessible only indirectly, through the interpretation of displacements of the unconscious. Thus, we are constantly caught in dilemmas of trying to find meaning in the 'uncertain', which leads to feelings of anxiety. This raises an ethical obligation for teacher educators to explore their own conflicts; attempting to control the re-enactment of old conflicts under the guise of new pedagogical encounters with student teachers. In the absence of opportunities to gain insight into unconscious conflicts, encounters with student teachers may return unconsciously and involuntarily to scenes from their educational autobiographies. Such an exploration would require a teacher educator to consider how they understand the student teachers' conflicts through their subjective struggles. Both Freud (1933) and Anna Freud (1930) emphasised the importance that all those who enter educational contexts should experience a period of self-analysis to heighten awareness of internal conflicts. In fact, Freud considered the analysis of educators as "...more efficacious prophylactic measure..." (1933: 150) than the analysis of those they are working with. Anna Freud warns that without analysis, educators may become caught in transference dynamics casting both the analyst/analysand forwards and backwards into unresolved conflicts within their educational autobiographies (Britzman & Pitt, 1996).

The remainder of this chapter examines how Lacan's work connects to the above Freudian concepts. In doing so, I am attempting to gain a sense of why a 'gap', a feeling of 'loss' or 'lack', a desire for 'something else' exists for the student teachers. Lacan discusses the subject entering into language, the Symbolic, over which they have no prior control. One of the main aspects of Lacan's theory, was his introduction of the 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 2006), which centred on a process akin to a young child looking into a mirror and saying, "That's me." He uses the birth of a baby to illustrate that when a child is expected, expectations about their likely character, intelligence and disposition will be a point of speculation. The child acquires a sense of self, which is not of their choosing, which nevertheless, they will have to work out, live and identify with. A person's sense of self can be viewed as borrowed from 'the Other' but treated as 'me' (Hanley, 2005). When a baby is born, the family and eventually those whom they encounter as they enter the education system, become the Other (For the remainder of the chapter, the other written with an upper case 'O', refers to the Symbolic order manifested in structures of society, encountered in language). As the baby passes through a transitional stage into language, called the 'mirror stage', the infant begins to identify with the 'image' ascribed to them by the parents; this 'ideal image' of self is a misrecognition, as the child is incomplete (Lacan, 1977). Future experiences are orientated around this sense of self, however, it is at best a holding device for an ego, a misrecognition, that can never be fully complete (Hanley, 2005).

Walters (2014) draws upon the work of Bibby (2011), who demonstrates how the 'mirror stage', can be applied to interactions within primary classroom contexts. Walters discusses Bibby's work, as offering a fruitful way of explaining and understanding classroom lives, identities and subjectivities. She presents an account of the influence of a teaching practitioner in two learners' lives and the relationship of this to the learners' identities, regulation, subjectivity and school achievement. The paper demonstrates that psychoanalytic theory can take us beyond the rational, meaning-making teacher and learner, to include the affective and emotional aspects of classroom life (Clarke, 2006). Walters (2014) explains the approach has enabled her to explore and evidence the mirroring function of the teaching practitioner and how important learner identifications are, specifically how desire and fantasy are encapsulated within this, as children become subjects in the classroom. She

concludes that the teaching practitioner's influential role lies in the mirroring function, specifically the manner in which the two learners make sense of themselves in relation to this.

Lacan's work (1977) focuses on how subjects identify with 'images' of themselves and social relations. In doing so, the analyst asks neither the subject get better nor that he become 'normal'; the analyst requires nothing, imposes nothing. He is there so the subject may gain access to the 'truth' of his own desire and not so he may respond to the Other's demands (2007). Against this sort of frame, the task of this study is not to seek 'truth' or 'cure', but rather to ask how discursive formulations have taken shape (Brown & England, 2005) in the minds of student teachers and how they may reveal themselves through the narrative accounts. The premise that any individual could construct a definite narrative account of their educational autobiographies is flawed, insofar as history always depends upon where/when it was told and how one perceives it. In this respect, it is the necessary failure of the narratives produced, that provide the motivation to continually re-write the story. In this sense, it is an impossibility to grasp reality and in any attempt, we will inevitably alter reality subsequently grasping something very different – a disturbed 'version'. The 'image' is subjected to a referential framework, as the individual's formation is caught between a fantasy of themselves and the world in which they are operating; neither fantasy can ever be successful in encapsulating a complete 'image' (Hanley, 2005). Inevitably, elements of the 'image' are present in the background, yet do not reveal themselves in the conscious but disturb the functioning of the accounts presented (Lacan, 1977).

In addressing these issues, Lacan refers to the notions of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. These domains overlap and connect in various ways. Lacan believed our sense of self – that is our egos – are a necessary function of how we perceive the world. The fantasy of ourselves is called our Imaginary identification (a delusory mirror image we have of ourselves) meanwhile, the fantasy we have of the world is processed through the Symbolic (the ideological apparatus that surrounds and engulfs us). Desire is present in both of the fantasies as the 'gap' (or the surplus) that separates the fantasy from the reality it seeks to capture; both the fantasy and the 'gap' are vital. The fantasy structures the individuals experience; the

'gap' serves as the motivation that gives the fantasy meaning. The Imaginary is the domain of the other, that part of the ego, which sees itself as individual, although this is a misrecognition (Brown, 2008). The Imaginary allows us to 'overlook' the Symbolic order and see ourselves as separate from it. The Symbolic is the domain of the Other, the realm of language and culture into which we are born. The Real is the world of 'being' rather than language. When the subject enters language and meaning, 'being' becomes 'lost'. Meaning therefore introduces 'lack' in being in the subject. The Real is just 'there', inside and outside us, outside language and resisting signification, creating a permanent stage of disharmony between the other two domains (Hanley, 2005). The Symbolic works on the Real, reducing it to pieces that can be articulated, yet there will always be a 'surplus', which resists signification (Žižek, 1989: 4). It is the 'surplus' of the Real that is always 'in front of' desire. The 'loss' or 'lack' can be described as a breach in the sense of wholeness, which the subject feels.

From then on in, the subject will come to be "...a being in language..." relying on signification for the construction of identity, "...I as in other..." (Lacan, 1977: 23). The 'gap' between the self-who-lacks and the imagined whole self, "...the imago of one's own body..." (Lacan, 1977: 3) is marked by a desire to compensate for the 'loss' felt. This 'gap' creates desire that shapes life itself (Brown & McNamara, 2011). For the student teachers, locating a sense of self is not just about misrecognition in a social context; rather it is a function of misrecognition of oneself in a rather more fundamental way (Brown & McNamara, 2005). The construction of a sense of self is an attempt to reconcile one's view of oneself, with the views one supposes the Other has of them. Therefore, for a student teacher who seeks to reconcile teacher fantasies with social demands, there is inevitably a 'gap' between the teaching practitioner they think they are and their teacher fantasy. For Lacan, it is this 'gap', which defines their sense of self, as it creates a space for subjective intervention. It provides the position from which the individual can view the world and produce a subjective account of it, as if from outside it (Brown & McNamara, 2005). For the student teachers, the task is not so much concerned with reaching a 'correct version', rather it focuses on what can be learned through making successive substitutions of the stories told; it is through this they can learn something about the Real (Brown, 2008). In this sense, the narrative accounts create a 'window' through

which a temporal 'version' of the student teacher and their teacher fantasies are seen.

Whilst the Real resists the Symbolic, traces of the Real can be found in the Symbolic and its 'effects' put into language. This is the role of the rigid designator, the 'point de capiton', which pins signification, creating a sense of unity in a potentially disparate field, "...the word to which 'things' themselves refer to recognise themselves in their unity..." (Žižek, 1989: 95). The 'point de caption', while a pure signifier and without meaning, is perceived saturated with meaning, as meaning determines all others and thus totalises the ideological field. The 'point de capiton' works to hide the 'loss' or 'lack' inherent in the Other by offering a seemingly coherent and harmonious ideological framing. In pinning the ideological field, the 'point de capiton' is at its most powerful, when it pins the desires of the individual and requirements of the stakeholders within the same location (Hanley, 2005). The student teachers' fantasies become part of the fabric of the Higher Education Institution's demands:

"The point de capiton is the point through which the subject is sewn to the signifier, and at the same point which interpellates the individual into subject by addressing it with the call of a certain master signifier." (Žižek, 1989: 101)

In order to achieve a sense of what the student teachers perceive the Other requires of them, there is a need to consider how 'official' stories play out, in order to gain a sense of how social demands are embraced, resisted or rejected. In this sense, the student teachers are re-storying their narrative accounts to accommodate external demands that disrupt their teacher fantasies. However, such teacher fantasies are always illusory phenomena concealing desires that remain unfulfilled, yet may be found quite palatable by the student teachers. In this notion of the subject, individuals speak the 'society' of which they are part of, immersed as they are in normative discourses.

Clarke, Michell & Ellis (2017) focus their research upon the interplay between student teachers' aspirations for their practice, with perceptions of more socialized and formalized institutional requirements. They highlight the developmental potential of dialectical interactions between these 'inside out' and 'outside in' perspectives. The authors draw on psychoanalytic theory to analyse data from one student teacher



account of their struggle to navigate between, on the one hand, their 'internal' ideals and aspirations and, on the other hand, the external perspective and influence of the mentor, as a representative of the wider social and institutional order (Clarke et al. 2017). They specifically focus on Lacan's notions of the 'ego ideal', derived from external (Symbolic) prototypes and the 'ideal ego' reflecting the individual's (Imaginary) identifications (Lacan, 1977). The paper concludes by considering how universities and schools might recognize the need for a sustained, open-ended dialectic between the 'ego ideal' and the 'ideal ego'. In contrast, the 'outside in' perspective offered by the 'ego ideal', provides a way for student teachers to move beyond the potentially deadening and immobilizing effects of narcissistic fixation and fantasy associated with the 'ideal ego'; yet the latter may conversely offer resources for resisting the regulatory regimes of the authoritative Other, by imagining alternative scenarios (Clarke et al. 2017). Critically, their argument is that student teachers do not develop from prioritizing 'outside in/ego ideal' over 'inside out/ideal ego' or vice versa, rather from maintaining a space for productive tension.

## **Summary**

For Lacan, psychoanalysis is a continual and permanent aspect of self-realizing and a recurrent response to perceived normative discourses. The 'gap' between the student teachers' fantasies and the Real can never be closed. Through a Lacanian approach, the student teachers will continuously dismantle and restructure the prevalent Symbolic order guiding normative discourses, particularly their entrapment within these specific discourses. The student teachers' sense of self is never fixed but fluid; they can never capture what they want to because the language is not their own. Through my engagement with Lacanian theory, I established a more specific focus for how the study developed alongside the unit. My intention was to enable the student teachers to embark on a unique pedagogical process, requiring them to continuously re-story narrative accounts of their experiences, re-framing their teacher fantasies successively at different points within the journey. In doing so, they were always anticipating a 'true' version but never quite getting there. The teacher educator's role within the unit became prominent in prompting the student teachers to become comfortable with 'uncertainty', the 'unknown' and the anxiety provoked.

This chapter concludes by suggesting that a psychoanalytically informed approach to teacher education has the potential to create space to examine past conflicts within the present; it should not attempt to 'cure' conflicts. Such an approach focuses on 'desire' and 'loss'/'lack' as crucial to pedagogical development. This is potentially an uncomfortable construction of teacher education for policy makers, for whom teacher education has long been a site for both provoking and seeking to allay social anxiety (Clarke & Phelan, 2015). Psychoanalysis refuses to frame anxiety in the 'negative', that is, as a bothersome affect that needs to be repressed or abolished since it disrupts the 'normal' functioning of the subject. Instead, anxiety would need to be perceived as a valid response to internal and external conditions generating a purposeful site of conflict.

## Chapter 3

### My story

#### Originally written 2015

This chapter is a story – my story in fact – the story of becoming and being a student teacher, teaching practitioner, teacher educator and researcher in the field of teacher education. I wrote my story, with the intention of using it as a piece of autobiographical data to analyse as part of the unit with the student teachers. It was written at the start of the unit (2015-2016), between the first and second session. Simultaneously, the student teachers were asked to write their first narrative entry, documenting the teaching practitioner they think they are and that which they aspire to be. My intention was to provide my story as a model. As the student teachers began to submit their narrative entries, I began to realise how differently some of them had interpreted the task. By presenting them with my story, I could have unintentionally changed the way in which they attempted further entries and made sense of them, potentially stifling their approach and ability to recognise significant aspects of the data. On an ethical note, I was additionally concerned that presenting the student teachers with a model would cause unnecessary anxiety if they interpreted theirs as different. For these reasons, I decided not to use the data in this respect. Instead, I have chosen to include it as a chapter within the thesis, to enable the reader to gain an insight into my positionality as the researcher. I refer to it elsewhere within the thesis, in conjunction with the student teachers' data. As this chapter was written a substantial number of years after the different stages of my educational autobiography referred to, it is important to recognise the content could in no way offer any 'truth' about the experiences discussed, only fragments of memories held together temporally. My story has been intentionally crafted in a 'comfortable' narrative style, remembering the intended audience was originally the student teachers.

*One of my earliest memories is playing schools in my bedroom. I was about five years old. I remember acting out events from a recent visit, working hard to personify my reception teacher Mrs Terry but as Miss Jam - I know very imaginative! I distinctly remember having a plastic yellow brief case containing coloured pens,*

*stickers and exercise books for marking. Recently, I found this in the loft and spent time examining it, revelling in the nostalgia generated from such simple objects, which stimulated hours of pleasure. I remember how frustrated I felt, trying to write (squiggle) on my blackboard. I remember thinking to myself I might be better at being the pupil rather than the teacher, as all teachers needed to be able to write on the lines on blackboards. The game soon became a childhood favourite, right up until my teens. I often played with friends, retelling and making sense of situations, which had occurred at school, swapping between the two roles of teacher/student. It turns out, I have interchanged between these roles ever since!*

*I thoroughly enjoyed the primary school years of my education. I had various teachers who influenced my experience at school. Most of them were a credit to our profession and aroused a passion for learning that has continued to this day. Mrs Terry was my inspiration. She simply made learning magical! That is the only way to describe it. There was 'something else' she conjured up that made the experience different to every teacher since – there was a little bit of her in everything she did. From then on, she sparked an expectation I carried and measured other teachers against throughout my educational journey.*

*As I entered secondary school, over time, my love of learning began to diminish and it became more like a chore. Whilst I did have some great teachers, it always felt like their priorities lay with the system we were embroiled in, rather than with the pupils. Relationships were built with many of my teachers during this period, none had the same emotional attachment that I experienced with Mrs Terry. This 'lack' definitely had an impact upon how I perceived not only school, but my capabilities as a pupil. The magic, the sparkle had gone and whilst I have always been a determined individual, working hard to achieve what the teachers wanted me too, I felt there was no time for me to be me and for the teachers to be themselves. The system advocates a sense of direction, a purpose, something you are all working towards, an end goal or achievement. This 'lack' of time, 'lack' of relationship, 'lack' of magic and sparkle meant in retrospect, I felt lost in the system and myself as time went on.*

*When I completed my compulsory education, I had to decide what I was going to do next. I was hesitant about continuing my educational journey due to the experience of secondary school and I knew I did not want to study for another three years any*

one subject. Seems obvious now – I was most inspired by the primary school experience, my biggest inspiration to my education was a teacher, I had spent many years pretending to be a teacher! In 2005, I applied to do a BA (HONS) Primary Education. When I went through the application process, I was asked the same question as applicants are asked today – Why do you want to be a teacher? As all other candidates, I had prepared the expectant answer about ‘wanting to make a difference’, ‘wanting to stimulate children’s minds’ and ‘wanting to motivate children to have a lifelong love of learning’. All of it, was to some extent true. I knew if I was honest with my interviewers – ‘I need a job that pays a decent salary and I don’t want to move back home...’, ‘There will always be a need for teachers...’ and ‘...I don’t want to work shifts or weekends...’ perhaps I would not have been successful in my application.

I loved my time at university! Naturally, the independent living and social experience dominates a large part of my memories but without sounding like a cliché, my passion for education returned. I loved that the course was structured into the separate primary school subjects and within these sessions, we were able to return to learning experiences we had whilst at that age. These experiences took me right back to my time with Mrs Terry, reigniting the passion I had lost over the years. The familiar was a comfort, particularly within the first year where I was getting used to living away from home. Initially, I enjoyed my time on school based training, another reminder of the primary years of education I remembered fondly. As the course progressed, I began to see the school and university contexts as separate entities due to how I felt when I was in them. School became a context full of complexities, ambiguity, pressure and expectation. I found myself less and less able to focus on why I wanted to be a teacher, solely focusing on survival from one day to the next. I was fixated with trying to meet all stakeholders’ expectations, focusing on getting to the end, with little time given to my desires. I became acceptant that I would never be able to be the teacher I wanted to be whilst on placement because I was only a visitor in the context. Until I acquired my own classroom, I had to be patient. It would be then I could become and be my teacher fantasy. I enjoyed my time with other teachers; they seemed to hold the key to challenges I faced in their classrooms; after all, they knew their children best! Subsequently, I began to yearn for such ‘knowledge’ and found it had greater value to my teacher education, as it gave me

*practical solutions to challenges I was facing on a day-to-day basis, settling my feelings of anxiety. I know many of my peers felt the same. By the end of my first placement, I became increasingly skilled at 'playing the game' (ironically as I had done as a child), ensuring I was paying attention to key aspects of the class teacher's practice that had the most significant impact within the classroom environment. At times, I would find myself talking and behaving similarly to class teachers I had been placed with, aiding the development of relationships with them and their pupils. I began actively noticing priorities of both the school and university, ensuring I attended to these as and when others observed me.*

*Once I returned to the university context, the feelings of anxiety subsided and so did the urgency to acquire 'knowledge'. Of course, in retrospect I valued the 'knowledge' acquired in university; after all, it assisted me in passing assignments. I am not saying we were not given examples of practice we could take into the school context but once in there, I found them hard to apply due to the complex and subjective reality of classrooms. University became my home, my familiar, my nostalgic, where I felt safe and secure to attend to the unnerving, the complicated, the uncertainties of the school context. I cannot remember the specific focus of the Teaching Studies units back then but I remember how many of our sessions used to become hijacked by, what we considered, more pressing issues. I remember being fixated with wanting answers! I wanted to know exactly what to do in school and felt university is where I should be able to get the answers. I began to view discussions as therapy, and whilst becoming more comfortable with the idea that answers could never be found, I revelled in the opportunity to talk and challenge ideas.*

*When I graduated in 2009, I went out with my family for a meal to celebrate my achievement. As we walked into the restaurant, Mrs Terry was sat down at a table with her family celebrating her retirement. For me, there could have been no other sign the career path I had chosen was the right one to take. To this day, when I see Mrs Terry around, I always feel an immense rush of emotion towards her, an appreciation for the lifelong gift she has bestowed me. On reflection, I never felt ready to be a teacher, or to leave the university context behind. That is why, I decided to continue my studies and enrol on a Masters in Teaching and three years later the Doctorate in Education.*

*My time as a primary teacher is a bit of a blur. I cannot really tell you much about it. I think back to the vast amount of time I devoted to those four years in the classroom and feel nothing – I feel numb to it all. I was so immersed within the context, within the role, nothing else mattered; it took priority over everything in my life. I think back to specific children, incidences, experiences, moments and I know they happened but I struggle to conjure any kind of emotional connection. I began to despise my acceptance of the situation. I was beginning to resent the time it was taking me out of school hours to manage all of the requirements placed on me, by stakeholders. The 'me' I see in those moments, I do not recognise and most of the time I do not want to know. What I do know is, I would never have survived my first year of teaching without the Masters in Teaching sessions, as these provided me with the same release as Teaching Studies. They were an opportunity to talk through issues at school I felt unable to discuss within the context itself. They challenged my thinking academically, which I felt I 'lacked' since entering the school context.*

*When the opportunity arose for me to return to the university context within a professional capacity, I jumped at the chance, particularly as my role would be to teach Teaching Studies! This move was not in the plan, as I had resigned myself to the realisation that the reality I had created for myself was it. Somehow, I would have to fit my life around my job. Goodness knows how! Those couple of weeks going through the interview process made me realise how unhappy I had become. I had no desire to move into a management position in the school context, as this would remove me from the aspect of the job that kept me going – my relationship with the children. Therefore, the move to the university context offered me an escape! An opportunity to become and be the teacher I wanted to be. Even though the role removed me from regular interaction with children, I felt being a teacher educator would be for the 'greater good'. I would be inspiring student teachers who would be practising in and out of the school context. I would be their role model, as Mrs Terry had been mine.*

During the early stages of my time as a teacher educator, I forged a set of expectations about my new role based upon my experience of teacher education. For the majority of the time, I envisaged I would be 'teaching'. I understood teaching in the traditional sense, despite my engagement with the Masters in Teaching and first year of the Doctorate in Education. I envisaged thirty or so student teachers, a

whiteboard at the front, learning objectives visible and student teachers sitting around tables discussing ‘theory’ and educational issues. I had the usual anxiety at the start of term: Would I be able to control the class? Would the student teachers respect me? Did I ‘know’ enough? Would they relate to me? As the first year unfolded, I adjusted. I have no recollection of exactly how or when I became aware of how much of my experiences as a student teacher were influencing my decisions as a teacher educator. In this sense, the beginning of this study certainly crept up on me although I was not consciously aware of it until twelve months into phase B of the Doctorate in Education. I felt caught within what Žižek calls a “...closed self-propelling loop ... a fetishistic satisfaction...” (2006: 63). In other words, I compliantly ‘played the game’ of being a teacher educator. I felt a passive resistance developing; yet, I was so entrenched in the reproduction of the existing story, I became complicit in its perpetuation. I longed for a lens to help me notice normative discourses surrounding teacher education.

Whilst I may struggle to identify exactly when I decided upon the focus for this thesis, I feel it is important to clarify a couple of key points about the nature of the study, my influences and importantly outline some of my own epistemological assumptions regarding what constitutes ‘knowledge’. Embarking upon my doctoral studies, I would often find myself fixating on one of the central tenets of research at this level; the idea that doctoral students’ research must make a ‘contribution to knowledge’. This facet of the process has been one of the most ambiguous notions I have had to reconcile. Despite my best efforts, I cannot help but find this expectation deeply unnerving and one I still feel anxious about. The idea that I might contribute to a ‘field of knowledge’ seems implausible. During the more optimistic phases of my study, I have developed a fantasy that has driven me to the ‘end’ – a beautifully red leather bound book, with Dr Charlotte Booth in gold lettering down the spine. What is rather profound about the fantasy is that despite being consciously aware of how problematic a conceptualisation of ‘knowledge’ this is, it has still existed as one of the main drivers to see the study through. This conceptualisation, which has often proven itself as my default position, is not, in fact, how I have come to understand the process by which we understand the world at all! Yet it exists and appears ingrained somehow. I have come to realise ‘knowledge’ is partial and necessarily discursively constructed. This, as Britzman (2003) explains, disturbs the notion that



there is a reality out there waiting to be 'known', captured through language by researchers such as myself. I feel increasingly uncomfortable with any perception of 'storying' as an innocent process that allows unproblematic access to the 'thing' we seek to represent, without giving consideration to the ways in which I engage in the act of representation myself.

## **Summary**

The above story may lead you to think otherwise, but it is of course a story full of intent. The Teaching Studies connection for example, is one that only becomes significant in retrospect. Had I decided to write a thesis on something different, the story would have needed to serve a different purpose. Nevertheless, it is, after all, a narrative device, meant to position the narrator and reader. If it had been successful in its aims, then I should be beginning to emerge, as a writer inhabiting what I have come to realise is a strange place full of the complicated and complex - the 'unknown'. I am a teacher educator and I have chosen to research student teachers, a process communicated through the production/reproduction of a story; it captures yet another 'chapter' in my educational autobiography.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Knowing knowledge**

**Originally written 2016**

This chapter contains my initial encounter with the work of Deborah Britzman (2006). I stumbled across her research whilst reading around the concept of educational autobiographies; her work was my first introduction to the psychoanalytical field. As my research progressed, I began to draw upon Britzman's work to underpin a lot of my understanding of other notoriously difficult theorists within the field. Britzman's work around 'knowledge' and 'cultural myths' was significant in the development of my thinking, thus it seemed appropriate to include it, as chapters within the thesis.

This chapter contains data from a thirty-minute focus group discussion which occurred in the academic year 2014-2015, as well as referring to elements of my story (chapter 3). In preparation for developing the unit and considering how the unit might provide a 'space' for the study, I asked a group of twelve second year student teachers, to reflect upon their experiences of the existing first year Teaching Studies unit. Similarly, to the student teachers who are the main participants within the study, the twelve student teachers involved in the focus group were randomly selected off various class lists so the discussion could be considered more representative of the unit as a whole, rather than specific experiences with particular teacher educators. I did not teach any of them. They all consented for the content of the focus group discussion to be used for the study and to aid programme development. The focus of the discussion challenged them to consider any preconceptions they had about the types of 'knowledge' they expected to encounter within their first year of teacher education. As the unit leader, looking to make changes in light of an anticipated study, I wanted to gain an understanding of existing preconceptions, identifying where a gap might be for me to conduct research. The rationale for combining data from both sources illustrates the inadvertent and unavoidable positionality of the researcher, who has herself experienced teacher education as a student teacher; my interpretation of their discussion is inevitably influenced by the subjective experiences within my educational autobiography.

Britzman (2006) compares education to an encounter with an avalanche of 'certainty'. Undeniably, we cannot escape from the fact that all student teachers have grown up in schools and have spent their childhood and adolescence observing the relationship between teaching practitioners and pupils; in this respect, when they enter teacher education, the avalanche of experience they have undergone confirms itself (Britzman, 2006). Britzman (2006) discusses four types of 'knowing' and 'knowledge' that teacher education structures normalise. She presents the four conceptualisations of compartmentalisation of knowledge, pedagogy and content, knowledge and interests, theory and practice, which I have chosen to structure this chapter around. I attempt to make sense of what aspects of the unit I could develop, in order to identify opportunities to challenge normative discourses around 'knowing knowledge', established within educational autobiographies.

### ***Compartmentalisation of knowledge***

Compartmentalisation refers to the limits of relevance and structures our definitions of context and content. This way of presenting 'knowledge' imposes measures of credibility that determine what we accept and reject as 'truth', stipulating the boundaries of discourse (what is spoken or remains unsaid) and provides borders of interpretation (Britzman, 2006). The compartmentalisation of school subjects continues into teacher education, with the student teachers holding an expectation that this familiar relationship with 'knowledge' will continue. Student teachers have an expectation the teacher educator will supplement any 'gaps' within their subject 'knowledge' to enable them to become 'experts' in teaching these subject areas. The data suggested student teachers arrived with concerns that any potential 'gaps' within their subject 'knowledge' could have a detrimental impact upon their success:

“...the way we got taught something when we were at school has developed so much, that if we didn't revisit how to teach something, we would be teaching them in a way that, that's like old fashioned. If you are in school teaching and a child finds it difficult, you can say well why don't you try it this way...”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“I loved that the course was structured into the separate primary school subjects and within these sessions, we were able to return to learning experiences we had whilst at that age.”

(My story 2015-2016)

These concerns were enhanced by a requirement to pass Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) tests (Department for Education, 2018: online) in Mathematics and English before the student teachers enter teacher education, despite already meeting the academic admission requirements. These chosen subject areas add to the compartmentalisation of ‘knowledge’ as legitimate and inherent value placed upon them. This fragmented curriculum organisation, reduces ‘knowledge’ to discrete blocks of time, abstracting ‘knowledge’ from its socio-cultural roots and political consequences, decontextualizing ‘knowledge’ from practical existence (Britzman, 2006). This ‘knowledge’ type is self-referential, as for the student teachers, it seemed to hold no other context beyond its immediate presentation. For example, the neoliberal movement to return to ‘the basics’ in education is one instance of how time and value of self-referential ‘knowledge’, is used to legitimatise curricular selection. The return to ‘the basics’ presumes a simpler time and perception of ‘knowledge’ as presenting a single purpose and an essential meaning – to enhance individual and collective human capital, positively affecting economic growth and development (Patrik, 2013). Mass participation in education has potentially fragmented the student teachers’ conceptions of ‘knowledge’ and their relationship (both possible and given) to it, thwarting development of any other conceptualisation. The student teachers appeared to have no prior expectations of what a unit entitled ‘Teaching Studies’ would include. As the unit leader, this cemented a need for the unit to provide a ‘space’ away from environments that deliver compartmentalised ‘knowledge’ so they could engage critically with normative discourses prevailing in teacher education. Knowing these preconceptions existed, allowed me to anticipate the unit becoming a site of conflict, as the student teachers challenged existing relationships with ‘knowing knowledge’.

### ***Pedagogy and content***

Alongside the fantasy of becoming and being ‘experts’ in the compartmentalised subject areas, the student teachers expected to immerse themselves into the direct

process of teaching the subject areas – this process is labelled as ‘pedagogy’. This is where student teachers begin to form an understanding of many of the dualisms existing within the domain of teacher education – in this case between subject ‘knowledge’ and pedagogy. This separation tends to mystify the actual and potential relations between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’, reducing pedagogy to a technical and mechanical problem of transmission (Britzman, 2006). Within the data, the discussion group admitted to expecting and wanting ‘top tips’ for ‘pedagogy’, they could apply successfully into the school context:

“I just thought university would be to give us tips. When you give us tips, then we take it out onto placement and do it all and it works. The stuff we learn in foundation and core subjects, I have never delivered since. We want tips to make us better teachers.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

The binary relationship of this dualism sees pedagogy as of lower status to that of its counterpart subject ‘knowledge’. This relationship, as Britzman (2006) argues, is inscribed in existing structures of teacher education between the university and school context. Subject ‘knowledge’ is perceived as the ‘property’ of the university context and seemingly this elevation removes pedagogy into the realm of the practical within the school context. However, what the data revealed is the value placed on an interrelating relationship between the two, occurring within both contexts:

“...subject knowledge is important but so is the tutor’s intervention in the lesson. It works best when they stop the lesson and talk to us about how and why we are making choices in practice. A lot of tutors just teach us and don’t encourage us to be critical. We need explanations off tutors about why we should choose one ‘pedagogy’ over another...tutors are not giving us the answer. We are left to pick it up as we do it in school, as class teachers have not got the time to think about practice, in school there is not enough time to reflect.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“I began to yearn for such knowledge and found it had greater value to my teacher education, as it gave me practical solutions to challenges I was facing on a day-to-day basis, settling my feelings of unease.”

(My story 2015-2016)

Within the unit, the student teachers needed opportunities to reformulate their understanding of this relationship and to begin to view pedagogy as equally as important because as a concept, it draws attention to the process of ‘knowing knowledge’, enabling them to ask under what conditions and through what means do we ‘come to know’. Pedagogy demands and constructs complex social relationships and through exchange, can become productive, constituting the circumstances and subjectivities of ‘knowing’ (Britzman, 2006). Any discussion of pedagogy should address the discursive process of producing ‘knowledge’, as well as the strategies for interpreting ‘knowledge’ produced. Most importantly, the student teachers need to understand these processes so they begin to notice the complexities of choices made in practice.

### ***Knowledge and interests***

Student teachers enter university expecting to experience a traditionalist ‘lecture-like’ format. This form of presentation bestows both ‘knowledge’ and the teacher educator representing it, with an immutable quality of ‘certainty’ (Britzman, 2006). This presents ‘knowledge’ as something to be transmitted to student teachers, who have no voice in determining its relevance; an expectation highlighted in the data:

“University gives us the tools to see things differently. When I started teacher education, I looked at it in a very pragmatic way and took everything that happened in the classroom as black and white....it has made me feel more professional, as I can see my reality from different points of view and can make a choice about what will happen next. I have more control.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“I was surprised by how personalised the unit and assessments are. I imagined they would focus on expert knowledge rather than what we are interested in developing in our practice.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“I remember being fixated with wanting answers! I wanted to know exactly what to do in school and felt university is where I should be able to get the answers.”

(My story 2015-2016)

To deconstruct such prevailing discourses, the student teachers must cultivate a critical awareness of perspectival boundaries. ‘Space’ is required within the unit to challenge current conceptualisations of ‘knowledge’, by considering issues to do with representation, interpretation and meaning. The opportunity for student teachers to critically examine the complexities of the school context, as well as those who work within them, understanding tensions engendered by the curriculum and its practices, should be a priority. These tensions are ideological as they include notions of power, status and competence, representing a cacophony of values, beliefs, investments and discursive practices; these practices shape ‘knowledge’ and its interpretive possibilities (Britzman, 2006). This will allow the student teachers to examine how ‘knowledge’ is produced and the complex ways in which teaching practitioners and pupils mediate it. Student teachers must confront subjective experiences derived from their educational autobiographies and examine how deep convictions, investments and ideological values and beliefs have influenced their teacher fantasies.

### ***Theory and practice***

The fragmentation of theory and practice is most apparent during the shift from learning about teaching within the university to the school context (Britzman, 2006). This way of thinking perpetuates the assumption that the university is detached from practical concerns. This notion draws on an understanding of theory as ‘academia’-research derived from studies external to the school context by ‘experts’ within the field. The data suggested the majority of student teachers enter teacher education with fantasies about the kind of ‘theory’ they expect to encounter. These theories predominantly derive from psychology and orientate around child development, behaviour, teaching, learning etc. within the classroom contexts:

“I learn the stuff from university - theory - to pass my assignments, rather than relate it to practice because you don’t have time to do that in reality.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“Of course, in retrospect I valued the knowledge acquired in university; after all, it assisted me in passing assignments. I am not saying we were not given examples of practice we could take into the school context but once in there, I found them hard to apply due to the complex and subjective reality of classrooms.”

(My story 2015-2016)

The student teachers expected to learn how to apply such ‘theories’ in order to demonstrate competency as teaching practitioners in practice, through the production of assignments; in doing so, the binary is re-confirmed, showing how relations of power are constructed and maintained within structures, by granting normality and rationality to the dominant term in any binary. The student teachers believed their role was to ‘unravel’ theories onto their practice, with our role, as teacher educators, to be to aid their attempts:

“I know some people have discussed in this group what a shock it was to come to university and be expected to learn theory on a primary course. They expected it to be practically based and there would be no requirement to think theoretically. A lot of us have had a bit of a shock...Those who don’t accept the importance of theory, do not engage and therefore don’t do as well. If you come here thinking, I don’t want to be here I want to be in school, then you aren’t going to see the value.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

For the student teachers, there was a conflict in whether practice as ‘knowledge’ competes with and is even superior to or more valuable than ‘knowledge’ in its traditional sense. This conflict was dominated by prevailing neoliberal influence in teacher education, where an evidence-based rationality is key, influencing the student teachers to construct themselves as consumers of a service their teacher educator provider provides.

## **Summary**

This chapter, whilst somewhat removed from what became the focus of this thesis, was the origin of my understanding of the student teachers’ expectations of their first year of teacher education. It provided me with a deeper insight into the extent to



which expectations were governed by the experiences within the student teachers' educational autobiographies. As I had never taught the unit before, when I became the unit leader, it was vital I grasped how the unit 'worked' for existing student teachers, alongside other unit content in the first year of teacher education. The chapter was significant for how the unit's content developed, was shaped and organised, in preparation for data collection for the study. It drew my attention to the relationship between the student teacher and teacher educator in 'knowing knowledge'. The 'knowledge' distinctions made by Britzman (2006), provided me with a referential framework to begin to understand the student teachers' perspectives and existing relationships with 'knowledge'. It provided a starting point, for what I then thought, might be the focus of the analysis, although I was unsure as to what this would entail.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Cultural myths**

#### **Originally written 2016**

In the previous chapter, I explored how the student teachers' expectations of their teacher education, were revolving around ways of 'knowing knowledge'. During a re-examination of the data, I found there were other possible contributing factors to pre-existing expectations student teachers had of their teacher education and fantasies. The discussion in this chapter progresses the narrative on from Britzman's (2006) constructs of 'knowledge' to that of 'cultural myths' (2003). According to Britzman (2003), 'cultural myths' provide a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications and measures of thought, feelings and agency that make 'certain' the reality they seek to produce. They provide a semblance of order, structure and control in the emotional world of education. Recognition as successful or unsuccessful in practice, is associated with a student teachers' ability to articulate the relevancy of 'cultural myths' to their experience. Within this chapter, I identify a series of 'cultural myths' encapsulated within the data examined so far (chapter 4) - the focus group of twelve student teachers (academic year 2014-2015). By no means am I suggesting these are the entirety of the 'cultural myths' influencing the student teachers' expectations of their teacher education, yet, they present a snapshot and reveal something of the student teachers' anxieties.

#### **Knowing knowledge – teachers are experts!**

“...never knowing enough to teach...”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“...other teachers; they seemed to hold the key to the challenges I faced in their classrooms; after all, they knew their children best!”

(My story 2015-2016)

The student teachers recognised within the data that they go between two 'uncertain' worlds – being educated (student teacher) whilst educating others (teaching practitioner). The student teachers feel the pressure to 'know' and the corresponding

guilt in not 'knowing', as such, they are prevented from attending to deeper epistemological issues around constructions of 'knowledge'. For the student teachers, 'knowing' answers gives them the ability to adapt within an unpredictable environment predicated on structure, routine, rules and rationale, with existing teaching practitioners (school context) or teacher educators (university context) being experts in 'knowing knowledge'. The student teachers become experts in 'lack', but this makes the teaching practitioner's (school context) or the teacher educator's (university context) expertise, into a defence against all that is 'uncertain' about the profession. Having control over oneself and the environment occupied is considered desirable by stakeholders, whereas spontaneity serves as a temporary solution for a 'lack' of preparation. 'Knowledge' becomes a possession, one that is obtained by the student teacher through teacher education. 'Knowers' are bereft of capacity to intervene in the world and 'knowledge' is expressed as 'fixed' and 'static' (Britzman, 2006). Teacher fantasies are no more than adherence to the acquisition of predetermined skills, accomplished predominantly through imitation, recitation and assimilation within the school context (Britzman, 2006). This expertise in 'lack' infiltrates teacher education and potentially creates disparity between the desires of the teacher educator provider and those of the student teachers.

### **Certainty**

"...I quickly learnt tips from my teacher as to how to control the class...I spent a lot of time researching top tips for teaching hard concepts such as division..."

(Focus group 2104-2015)

"I became increasingly skilled at 'playing the game'...I was paying attention to key aspects of the class teacher's practice that had the most significant impact within the classroom environment. At times, I would find myself talking and behaving similarly to class teachers I had been placed with, in order to aid the development of relationships with them and their pupils."

(My story 2015-2016)

Many of the student teachers expressed a belief that success whilst within school contexts, was in part due to them 'knowing' technical solutions to the 'unknown' within classroom contexts. The student teachers' desires to obtain practical

'knowledge' for immediate classroom application were preferable. As such, whilst acknowledging the limitations of this approach, they recognised they were conceptualising teacher education as a pursuit for recipes for 'certainty'. A prominent anxiety was surrounding classroom discipline, derived from their familiarity with a teaching practitioner's role as a social controller. Without first establishing classroom control, the student teachers struggle to convey the subject matter of the lesson; this results in others questioning their competency as a member of the profession. Any appeal for assistance in such matters constructs the student teacher as 'lacking' in some way. As the student teachers judge themselves and others judge them on their success with such an individualised struggle, these anxieties preclude any desire to engage with any other construction of 'knowledge'. The cultural myth of creating and maintaining 'certainty' within classroom contexts prevails.

### **Individualisation**

"...I felt as if I could breathe when my teacher was called away...I just want to shut my classroom door and do what I want, without being judged..."

(Focus group 2014-2015)

"School became a context full of complexities, ambiguity, pressure and expectation. I found myself less and less able to focus on why I wanted to be a teacher, solely focusing on survival from one day to the next. I was fixated with trying to meet all stakeholders' expectations, focusing on getting to the end, with little time given to my desires."

(My story 2015-2016)

The 'cultural myth' of teaching as an individualised activity, was prevalent within the data, particularly around experiences in the school context. These comments offered an insight into the student teachers' perception of their ability to attend to conditions of spontaneity, which often left them feeling isolated in their quest for control. Any attempt by the university context to present 'truths' or a 'certain' reality, left the student teachers constructing the 'unknown' as a bind rather than an opportunity. This led to the upholding of the 'cultural myth' that the mastery of premonition and instantaneous response is an individualised process despite the anxiety evoked. Whilst learning to teach is individually experienced, in actuality it is a socially

negotiated construct; the press for individual control over education by stakeholders, including the student teachers themselves, obscures its social origins (Britzman, 2003). Individualised notions contradict and thereby thwart those in teacher education, intervening in contradictory realities. The vulnerable condition of being a social subject becomes a 'taboo' discourse in teacher education, continuing as an individualised site of conflict, of acquiring and demonstrating predetermined dispositions, skills and practices (Britzman, 2003).

### **Hatred of learning**

"...I feel like I have been on an emotional rollercoaster...It was difficult to think about bad experiences I have had in the past, when I was at school..."

(Focus group 2014-2015)

"...my love of learning began to diminish and it became more like a chore. Whilst I did have some great teachers, it always felt like their priorities lay with the system we were embroiled in, rather than with the pupils. Relationships were built with many of my teachers during this period; none had the same emotional attachment I had experienced with Mrs Terry. This 'lack' definitely had an impact upon how I perceived not only school, but my capabilities as a pupil."

(My story 2015-2016)

The data revealed many student teachers enter teacher education for two paradoxical reasons, either they had a positive experience of education or more commonly, they feel compelled to right what was 'lacking'; in both of these cases, experiences fuel teacher fantasies. The teacher education experience becomes an emotional acceptance of ignorance, as learning means understanding that 'knowledge' does not exhaust what is 'unknowable', that we act from not understanding (Britzman, 2003). In this sense, the student teachers' desire for 'control' is a defence against the 'unknown' leading to anxiety. The student teachers become anxious when they realise their teacher fantasies cannot be 'packaged' neatly. The anxiety is conceptualised in the form of 'bad' students, 'bad' grades, 'bad' theory, 'bad' pedagogy, 'bad' teacher educator, 'bad' teacher education and 'bad' university.

## **‘Real’ time, ‘real’ children, ‘really’ learning**

“...we learn by experience...school based training is where we learn the most...”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

“I became acceptant that I would never be able to be the teacher I wanted to be whilst on placement because I was only a visitor in the context. Until I acquired my own classroom, I had to be patient. It would be then I could become and be my teacher fantasy. I enjoyed my time with other teachers...”

(My story 2015-2016)

The ‘cultural myth’ that the school context is where the student teachers would be ‘practicing’ in ‘real’ time, on ‘real’ children in order for them to be ‘really’ learning is evident within the data. It propagates a binary logic that positions the university and school as both distant and distinct from one another, accentuating their differences rather than similarities. When the university context does not immediately address how to ‘make do’ during the avalanche of ‘uncertainty’, the university’s position in teacher education appears ‘lacking’ in some way (Britzman, 2003). The student teachers time in school contexts is perceived as the measure of teacher education, as such, time within the school context is implicitly valued. Moments of authenticity derived from the ‘unknown’ nature of the classroom context, mystically fill the void left by ‘knowledge’ explored in the university context. This way of thinking, preserves the notion that the university is somehow detached from practical concerns. In this way, the binary is twofold, as it serves as a way of devaluing the university input but in juxtaposition, the context provides a safer environment for the student teachers, as they are removed from feeling they have the power to influence the education of others. This suggests how relations of power are constructed and maintained within structures, by granting normality and rationality to normative discourses. These normative discourses collapse into a myriad of complex processes that occur within teacher education according to a pre-ordained path (Britzman, 2003).

## **Summary**

Britzman’s (2003 & 2006) work around ‘knowledge’ and ‘cultural myths’ provided me with ‘loose’ themes as a starting point for analysis. As the unit/study progressed, yet

again I returned to the focus groups data (academic year, 2014-2015) with fresh eyes. I began to appreciate the way in which the student teachers had constructed their journey as one fraught with emotion, sparked by a realisation of how complex becoming and being a teaching practitioner was. Within the data, student teachers reflect upon the emotions evoked:

“Since starting teacher education, I feel I have been on an emotional rollercoaster...”

“Initially, I felt as though I was on my own feeling confused about the things [tutor] was asking us to think about.”

“I felt like I was a stranger to a place where I should have felt familiar.”

“University took me back to my past and I regretted my decision to come. I found school hard. I wasn’t the best pupil. Initially, I was scared to tell my friends the truth about my past that I had been naughty in school in case they judged me.”

(Focus group 2014-2015)

The student teachers constructed their experience of teacher education as a struggle – a site of conflict. The process evoked emotional awareness of expectations, anticipations and judgements towards the self, relations with others and their teacher fantasies. As much as the field of teacher education represses the undesirable experiences in childhood of education, the repressed inevitably returns as a paradox, whether the student teachers are consciously or unconsciously aware (Britzman, 2006). The idea that teacher education pivots around the student teachers’ emotional world, as much as ‘knowing knowledge’ and ‘cultural myths’ is difficult to prioritise, for it means that in teaching, every aspect of the self, including its most ‘unknown’ parts, is called upon. The student teachers’ emotional conflicts conveyed through their memories, were an enigmatic resource for insight, which led to a readjustment of the study’s focus from then on in.

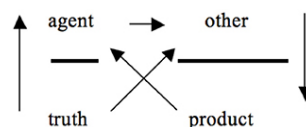
## Chapter 6

### Teaching studies - a Lacanian lens

Originally written 2017

This chapter focuses on Lacan's (2007) theory of the Four Discourses, where he offers thought-provoking explorations of subjectivity, language and insights into the unconscious. I feel the use of Lacan's Four Discourses, allowed me to tentatively 'bring together' some of the struggles experienced by the student teachers. Lacan's theory represents four different ways of 'knowing' and thinking about how discourses work; "The discourses in question are nothing other than the signifying articulation, the apparatus whose presence, where existing status alone dominates and governs anything that at any given moment is capable of emerging as speech." (2007: 166) The use of Lacan's theory is not to be interpreted as a 'remedy' or 'cure' to struggles experienced and explored through the unit/study, but offers an alternative perspective to challenge existing understandings and generate new ones.

Within Lacan's theory, there are four positions in each discourse. They are as follows: agent (speaker of the discourse), other (what the discourse is addressed to), product (what the discourse has created) and truth (what the discourse attempted to express).



Lacan discusses how the unconscious develops in the intersubjective realm through engagement with language and the social, within which he identifies the reciprocal relationship of 'agent' and 'other'. The 'agent' is the 'truthful' speaking subject that commands the 'other'. As the receiver, the 'other' acts upon the 'agent's' will and produces a 'product'. An example of this, in the context of this study, is the transactional relationship between the Higher Education Institution and the teacher educator - an exchange driven by the neoliberal movement dominant within the education sector. Lacan identifies that through a reciprocal exchange, surplus is produced for both the 'agent' and 'other'. The 'truths' required of the 'other' are



fuelled by fantasies of how teacher education should be, which reveals fallibility and mobilises desire. These 'truths' may be implicit, tacit, hidden from the 'agent' themselves as unconscious desires but in the conscious act of commanding the 'agent' finds gratification, even if they are unaware of any surplus produced - an inadvertent bi-product, whilst acting upon the 'agent's' commands. For example, the surplus for the teacher educator might be the relationship built with student teachers through interactions. The emotional investment within the teacher educator's role is not part of their 'official' role, yet is an integral part of aiding the teacher educator to be successful in producing the desired product – 'Outstanding' teaching practitioners (Department for Education, 2014 : online).

In addition, there are four variables, which occupy these positions. Lacan uses symbols to capture the positions to show how language works differently in various social circumstances. For the purpose of this study, I will be using symbols presented in the theory (master signifiers (S1), 'knowledge' (S2), the divided subject (\$), and the object (a)), providing an explanation of my understanding of them, within each of the Four Discourses. The Four Discourses are as follows: Master (governance over others), University (institutions and how they deliver the Master's messages), Hysteric (protesting and objecting to the Master), and Analyst (rebellious against the Master). Each discourse models a different way of understanding "...interrelationships between knowledge, truth, subjectivity and otherness, and how particular configurations among these elements are produced..." (Clarke, 2012: 51). The discourses of the Master and University are often considered authoritarian discourses of mastery, insofar as both are dominated by master signifiers – whether in the place of agency, as in the discourse of the Master, or in the place of truth, as in the discourse of the University (Clarke, 2012: 55). In the discourses of the Hysteric and Analyst, the relation between the individual agent and master signifiers, is more ambivalent.

Within this chapter, I consider how engagement with the Four Discourses has extended my understanding of the student teachers' experience of the unit as a site of conflict.

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

- ❖ The master signifiers (S1) are ‘things’ that the subject identifies with; their value is subliminally understood. There are many unsaid but widely obeyed demands made through various normative discourses.
- ❖ ‘Knowledge’ (S2) creates what the subject is. Different types of ‘knowledge’ differ in credence, which in turn implicitly define ontological beliefs and epistemological frames. These derive from the student teachers’ educational autobiographies and in some cases are reaffirmed through the unit.
- ❖ The divided subject (\$) is what is “...operative in all the various ways in which we fail to identify ourselves, grasp ourselves, or coincide with ourselves...” (Bracher, 1994: 113). Consequently, discourse acts upon and within us, to create the division between what we are meant to be and what we feel we are when discourses force homogeneity and fails to take account of ours.
- ❖ Finally, the object (a) is that of desire, to rectify a feeling of ‘lack’ or ‘loss’.

For Lacan (2008), ‘knowledge’ can always be renewed. This is not to imply that current ‘knowledge’ should be viewed with suspicion, as inadequate or inauthentic. ‘Knowledge’ is a reflection of the reality we perceive. ‘Knowledge’ accumulates all around us; as inhabitants of social space, it is also built into us (Hanley & Brown, 2017). Yet we can learn to discern the limitations of such stable arrangements, to question how they define and delimit our thoughts, to reshape the story of our experiences. In Lacan’s account of subjectivity, desire is the force propelling us irresistibly towards new ways of understanding our lives and the people we are. Our desire attracts us to the “...holes in discourse...” (Lacan, 2008: 27), in order to re-think, and re-tell the story of our changing relations to the world. We experience the world as coming into being, encountering elements of this world as part of us, with this encounter yielding fresh motives for growth and renewal.

**Master discourse** - where “...the subject finds himself, along with all the illusions that this comprises, bound to the master signifier, whereas knowledge brings about his insertion into jouissance...” (Lacan, 2007: 93) and the Master “...plays upon ... the crystal of language...” (Lacan, 2007: 152).

The neoliberal movement has resulted in the government shaping education according to economic conditions (Zeichner, 2010). The government fulfils the Master role in education and operates particular Master discourses in the service of its policy ambitions to reshape education according to market parameters. The Master discourse works through demanding compliance to certain operational or administrative protocols, in the name of customary or desired practices. The 'agency' relates to the agent's power to dominate the field of discourse, a power that is tautological, resting on the mere assertion of discursive prerogative (Hanley & Brown, 2017).

Lacan's Master discourse takes its origins from the binary positioning of the master/slave dialectic, where power is contingent upon someone being powerless. The Master discourse can be interpreted as the hidden dominating power existing only to reproduce itself. Thus, for the student teachers, whose identity has been determined for them by master signifiers throughout their educational autobiography, they perceive reality in particular ways, yet these ways are not necessary 'real' or 'truthful', as they are deliberate mirages devised by the Master in order to suppress the formation of their sense of self.

The student teachers are controlled by a desire to become their teacher fantasy, which is directed by the Master through their induction into normative discourses. They then acquire 'knowledge' (manufactured truths) which produce/reproduce a painful disconnect - a feeling of 'loss' or 'lack' - as they realise being involved in the system has a price that denies their individuality. In this interpretation, there is no room for individual desires (teacher fantasies), alternative 'cultural myths' or normative discourses than those prevailing. Lacan's discourse of the Master illustrates that the student teachers can be rendered as divided subjects, positioned as being caught between something and nothing. In other words, we are taught to desire 'something else' as it is preferable to nothing - this makes us divided. For the student teachers, the pressure to become 'Outstanding' (Department for Education, 2014: online), derives not necessarily from the will to teach but from the desire to satisfy the Other. The Master discourse tells student teachers what they should desire, even though it is unobtainable. The master signifiers (S1) construct

unquestioned authoritative 'knowledge' (S2) with no room for the student teachers' fantasies (a), equating to the student teachers always feeling unfulfilled in their attempts to be their teacher fantasy – the divided subject (\$).

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

The Master role is one which the teacher educator is expected to occupy, engrained within the education system. This configuration positions the teacher educator as full of 'knowledge' and the student teacher as the 'empty vessel'. In taking up these familiar positions, both fulfil a fantasy and evoke an emotional response of perverse enjoyment. The teacher educator is the subject that is supposed to 'know' and the student teacher, the subject who is supposed not to 'know' – they feel a 'loss' or 'lack' and are searching for 'something else' to fulfil it.

**University discourse** –“...unnatural knowledge out of its primitive localization at the level of the slave into the dominant place, by virtue of having become pure knowledge of the Master, ruled by his command...” (Lacan, 2007: 104).

The University discourse stands for the Higher Education Institution who establishes what the student teachers are required to 'know'. In Lacan's explanation of the University discourse, he presents 'knowledge' as unnatural. If we concede that unnatural 'knowledge' is artificial 'knowledge', then it is manufactured and designed to control the masses. In the discourse of the University, the exercising of 'rational', 'neutral', 'scientific' knowledge is supposed to replace relations of mastery and dominance, but the 'place of truth' relates to science's suppressed political/hegemonic dimension. In this sense, the student teachers' educational autobiographies have been governed by unnatural 'knowledge', as it has been used to subjugate the slave. The University discourse is often seen as bureaucratic, as it positions and alienates the student teacher as a passive receiver of 'knowledge', leaving the student teacher with the option to conform or the ostracisation of rebellion. Here, 'knowledge' (S2) is built upon master signifiers (S1), which produce a desire in the student teacher (a) to 'play the game', subsequently producing the divided subject (\$).

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{g}$$

The University operates on rules, regulations, principles and policies, which all provide structure to the lived experience. The University occupies a duplicitous 'safety' discourse for both the teacher educator and the student teacher. It gives the impression that if all of its rules, regulations, principles and policies are followed by both, the student journey will inevitably be linear and unproblematic, resulting in the outcome of 'Outstanding' for each student teacher who enrolls onto the programme. For the student teachers, they are appreciated merely to the degree that their practice complies with the QTS teachers' standards (Department of Education, 2014: online). This in turn, creates anxiety for both, when the reality of adhering to systems in place becomes interrupted and precarious. Anxiety is not recognised or acknowledged by the University.

**Hysteric discourse** – "...she wants the other to be a Master, and to know lots of things, but at the same time she doesn't want him to know so much that he does not believe she is the supreme price of all his knowledge. In other words, she wants a Master she can reign over. She reigns and he does not govern..." (Lacan, 2007: 129).

Lacan's Hysteric discourse is concerned with the experiences and conflicting demands made of the alienated divided subject. In this discourse, the Master is questioned and the authoritarian discourse is disrupted. The Hysteric discourse might be seen as being provoked in the subject, by a confusing element intrinsic to the demand being expressed in the Master discourse (Brown, Rowley & Smith, 2014). The subject addresses the Master, yet the mismatch between demand and response suggests an aspect of 'knowledge' that the Master discourse has concealed. The subject had been spurred on by the perceived 'gap', which has provoked their anxiety and motivation to become completely compliant with the demand being made by the Master. The agent in the Hysteric's discourse protests against the dominant discourses of the Master and University, but in truth "...the subject is still underpinned by an unacknowledged and repressed other..." (Clarke, 2012: 56).

Žižek (2006) describes how in this discourse, there can be a 'gap' between performance and awareness -where intellectual protest is combined with practical compliance. This discourse places the subject as the agent who is subversive and gives voice to their sense of alienation. Here the divided subject (\$) uses their desire, located in their teacher fantasies (a), to object to the Master (S1), which leads to the potential to produce new alternative 'knowledge' (S2).

$$\frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

Within this study, the Hysteric may refer to those moments within sessions where either the teacher educator or the student teacher, punctures the 'common sense' master/slave relationship. Teacher educators and students alternate the master/slave positions; the teacher educators are trying to anticipate the student teachers' desire to identify with a learning process in particular ways, whereas the student teachers maintain the Master's identity by subscribing to their distribution of 'knowledge'. In my experience, these tend to be the most valuable moments, where not only effective learning occurs but are usually the most memorable for both the teacher educator and student teacher; these experiences are then storied as such. These moments tend to be unexpected, impulsive and require all involved to act immediately. These moments are the ones that seemingly affect the emotions of those involved.

**Analyst discourse** – "...the Master in all this makes a small effort to make everything work, in other words, he gives an order. Simply by fulfilling his function as Master he loses something (Lacan, 2007: 107)...displacement that never ceases is the very condition of the Analytic discourse..." (Lacan, 2007: 147).

In the Analyst discourse, desire is the agent, whilst the Master is the 'loss' or 'lack'. The Analyst is directed at disrupting or resisting Master discourses enacted in the service of oppressive regimes, "...the Master's discourse has only one counterpoint, the Analytic discourse..." (Lacan, 2007: 87). Lacan argues the nature of the Analyst

discourse is to rebel against 'common sense'. Within these moments, new 'knowledge' is created and the Master discourse becomes transformed. The Analyst discourse is the enactment of the divided self, to produce new master signifiers by the subject. 'Knowledge' becomes the focus of the psychoanalytic experience (Lacan, 1977) and requires the student teachers to "...critically consider how the world is presented to them and the ways they situate themselves within the world." (Thomas, 2014) The student teacher becomes the Analyst when desire is mobilised.

With the student teachers' desires, the Analyst discourse requires the student teachers to recognise discourses and the narratives they 'story' about themselves are not fully within their control. It requires them to search for the underlying 'truth' of a message rather than its overt content. In this way, it is oppositional to authoritarian normative discourses, where overt content is reified and absolutized. The Analyst discourse can be considered as the most empowering, as it sees the subject's fantasies and anxieties as important in the experience. The Analyst discourse should be a central part of teacher education, as it actively works to empower student teacher exposure to oppressive and dictatorial aspects of discursive structures, creating new conditions of 'knowledge' (Thomas, 2014). The student teachers' desires (a) are underpinned by 'knowledge' (S<sub>2</sub>), which addresses the divided self (\$) to create new and alternative master signifiers (S<sub>1</sub>).

$$\frac{a \rightarrow \mathcal{S}}{S_2 \quad S_1}$$

The sense of agency afforded within this discourse, to the student teachers, requires the teacher educator's familiar role of Master to repress. The student teachers then begin to locate their teacher fantasies, whilst the teacher educator locates their inner imposter. In doing so, the teacher educator experiences anxiety due to having to shift from the Master position, creating opportunities for the student teachers to uphold agency and new 'knowledge'.

## Summary

For the student teachers, the journey into teaching is one that is far from linear and unproblematic and is dependent upon the surplus of the reciprocal relationship with

their teacher educator, as to whether they are able to 'break free' of dominant normative discourses, locating themselves in an agentic position. The student teachers will inevitably begin on a journey defined by a feeling of 'loss', generated from the familiarity of the master/slave relationship they have experienced in their educational autobiographies, to acquire 'something else' they are already in possession of. Anxiety is felt because of supposed gaps in 'knowing knowledge' they believe ought to be recognised and in doing so, there is a requirement for the student teacher to become 'comfortable' with 'uncertainty', both with the contradictions that exist and the reality that they can never 'know' everything. As much as we would like, as teacher educators, for this newfound awareness to enable the student teachers to recognise the structures they are trapped within, influence what gives them pleasure and 'know' what is contained within their teacher fantasies, our ability to do so is impossible. The student teachers will never be able to grasp and grapple with it, neither will we, as they are dependent upon 'uncertainties' to stimulate desire (Lacan, 2007). Lacan's theory of the Four Discourses reveals both the teacher educator/student teacher as incomplete and 'breaks down' the categorical difference between the two, rendering their relationship devoid of pedagogical significance. The fantasy of the teacher educator's privileged position in relation to 'knowledge' reaffirms the student teachers' desire to 'complete' themselves through 'knowing knowledge'.



## Chapter 7

### Struggles

Originally written 2015-2017

This chapter is structured around Lacan's theory of the Four Discourses (2007), drawing upon the discussion in chapter 6 as well as upon data from the student teachers' narrative entries and parallels within my story (contained in chapter 3). The data contained within this chapter, has gone through various stages of analysis.

#### **Stages of Analysis**

**Pathway 1:** This was produced during the gaps between each of the unit's sessions. For each student teachers' piece of data, I annotated my thoughts around the edge immediately after submission into the online depository. I began with the 'loose' themes of 'knowing knowledge' and 'cultural myths' as starting points, derived from my focus upon Britzman's work (contained in chapters 2, 4 and 5). At this stage, I had no real sense of what I was searching for. I noticed elements of the student teachers' stories which appealed to me without any real sense of why. I really struggled at this stage. It felt overwhelming as I attempted to muddle through the mass of narrative entries, spending months agonising over the choices I was making, as well as what would be lost through the selection process. There was a tendency for me to try to look for the 'correct' version of the stories - 'victory' narratives - rather than searching for what the student teachers' entries might have revealed. It was during pathway one, I identified two additional opportunities for data collection. I wanted the student teachers to consciously reflect upon their experience of the unit at a suitable mid-way point (Session 12 - January 2016) and once the unit had concluded (Session 19 - March 2016).

**Pathway 2:** I then 'storied' each data collection opportunity, identifying commonalities and differences within the student teachers' depiction of events. I felt it was vital to capture the journey as it progressed, to be able to claim any sort of validity to my interpretations. For each round of data collection, the first participant's data took the longest to narrate, as the initial stage of noticing framed the story I told about subsequent pieces of data. Whilst I could not escape the tendency to do this,

from then on, I consciously began each round of analysis with a different student teachers' narrative entry.

**Pathway 3:** I continuously re-organised the data from pathway 2 into various themes for discussion. I had expectedly diverted away from 'knowing knowledge' and 'cultural myths', as the unit/study progressed. I began to problematize the stories constructed, to identify 'struggles' the student teachers had experienced. I began consciously drawing parallels to my experience of teacher education, fragments of which were captured in my story (chapter 3).

**Pathway 4:** I consider this chapter pathway 4. I have structured the discussion around Lacan's theory of the Four Discourses. My intention is to 'story' the emotive experience of the unit, tentatively 'bringing together' struggles revealed within the narrative entries. The use of the Four Discourses is not to be interpreted as a 'remedy' or 'cure' to any struggles articulated in the data, rather it offers yet another alternative perspective to challenge existing understandings and generate new ones.

### **Participants**

I felt it important to provide the reader with 'character anchors', therefore, I have included participant descriptions, written by the student teachers, during the first session of the unit (September 2015).

#### ***Participant one – Kate***

Hello, my name is Kate. I am 27 years old. I have lived abroad for the majority of my education, due to my father being in the armed forces. Because of this, I have a range of cultural experiences of different education systems I can share whilst on the course. I am excited to get to grips with the academic side of the course. I love reading and am looking forward to developing my understanding of theories of child development I started during my A Levels. I want to be a teacher who is emotionally receptive towards all children in my care.

#### ***Participant two – Charlie***

I am single mum of a little girl, who is my everything! She is 8 years old. Despite getting pregnant and having her in my final year of school, I always knew I was going to come to university, even if it took me a little longer than my friends. I stayed

determined and I am so proud to be here today. She is my inspiration. She drives me to want to be the best I can be, both as a mummy but also as a teacher. Despite my personal circumstances, I still love doing everything you do, even though I commute in every day and have other priorities too. I want to be a compassionate teacher, valuing relationships with children above all else. I believe relationships are key to learning and being a teacher is a holistic practice.

### ***Participant three - Kayley***

I moved out of home 5 years ago and now live with my boyfriend in a flat in Salford. I have worked for an online marketing firm since completing my first degree in Media Studies. I always wanted to go into teaching but didn't get the qualifications I needed for the entry requirements, so chose to study something else, as I was desperate to go to university. I made the decision, once my degree was completed, to return to college part time to improve my A Level grades. I enjoyed my first attempt at university, particularly the living away from home and the social aspects, but once I got into the marketing sector, I felt it wasn't challenging enough for the rest of my working life. I feel teaching offers me something different every day. I am looking forward to learning off experts both in school and at university.

### ***Participant four - Amy***

My name is Amy, I am 19 years old and I am from London. I moved up here last week into halls and have already made some good friends in the flat I am living in. It is the first time I have lived away from my mum and step dad. I am really going to miss my younger sister, who I have been close too throughout my childhood. I work part time at a supermarket, as I did when I lived at home. I have wanted to be a teacher since I was a child. I used to love playing schools with my friends whenever they came round. I really enjoyed my education and had some fantastic teachers that have inspired me to want to become a teacher myself.

### ***Participant five – Bailey***

Hi, my name is Bailey. I am so excited to be at university! I cannot wait to get into school and start to teach children. I am dyslexic but this has never stopped me from achieving my dreams, despite being quite a shy child at school. I think because I have experienced my own personal difficulties, I will be able to support children who

experience similar whilst on placements and inspire them to reach for the stars! Many of my teachers were not interested in me, as I found learning difficult, but this has only made me more determined to succeed. I live at home with my mum and three siblings. I have a younger brother and two younger sisters. My younger brother has autism, so sometimes my home life can be disruptive due to his behaviour but I have a close relationship with him. I am hoping I will be able to help my mum manage his behaviour better, when I gain further knowledge of SEND during this degree.

### ***Participant six - Sarah***

My name is Sarah. I am 19 years old and live at home with my parents in a small village in Cheshire. I absolutely love my two horses – they are my life. I work part time in the local shop and in the school holidays, I gained work experience at the local nursery to help me get onto the course. As a child, I was often asked what I wanted to do when I grew up; my response was always the same, “*I want to be a teacher!*” I admired many of my teachers throughout primary school and have vivid memories still to this day, of particular lessons I enjoyed.

### **Four Discourses**

#### ***Master***

Lacan's Master discourse illustrates that the student teachers can be rendered as a divided subject, positioned as being caught between something and nothing. In other words, they are taught to desire 'something else' as it is preferable to nothing, which makes them divided. The Master asserts a particular version of reality, as though it is supported by systematic 'knowledge'. The Master places importance on being perceived as such, to avoid any charge of weakness or confusion.

When the student teachers enter teacher education, they are introduced to 'Qualified Teacher Status' or 'QTS' (Department for Education, 2014: online). In order to achieve 'QTS', the student teachers are required to meet the teachers' standards, defined as the minimum level of practice expected to signify a 'competent' teaching practitioner (Department for Education, 2014: online). Within this Higher Education Institution, student teachers are graded on a four-point scale: 'At risk of failure', 'Requires improvement', 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. The teachers' standards present

descriptions of 'knowledge', which mask underlying political commitments, offering an officially sanctioned representation, presented as irrefutable. The Master, in this case the Department for Education, are obliged to suspend doubt and make decisions to select one form of systematic 'knowledge' rather than another, which by "...virtue of its very structure, mask the division of the subject..." (Lacan, 2007: 103). Achieving QTS, specifically the grade 'Outstanding', becomes the ultimate 'end goal' for the student teachers. The pressure to become 'Outstanding' derives not necessarily from the will to teach but from the desire to satisfy the Other.

Lacan's Master discourse tells the student teachers what they should desire, even though it is unobtainable. The subject is therefore, always in a position of having to decipher what to do in response to a call that Žižek refers to as "Chez vuoi?" translated to "You're telling me that but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at?" (Žižek, 1989: 11). Caught in this excess of signification and at a 'loss' as to its 'real' meaning, the subject 'acts out' their part, with the subject never really 'knowing' what is adequate in relation to what the Other wants (Hanley, 2005). An example of this is in the student teachers' desire to present themselves as 'fitting' with the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online), thereby adopting "...a stable and positive identity obtained through identification with an existing socio-political order..." (Biesta, 2011: 145). Evidence of this, is seen in the data, in the way in which the student teachers adopt language associated with the teachers' standards early within narrative entries:

"Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils - establish a safe and stimulating environment for pupils, rooted in mutual respect...this standard supports my aspiration to be compassionate, as it clarifies teachers should create a safe environment...as well as establishing mutual respect between the student and teacher, which also influences me as a compassionate teacher."

(Bailey, data collection 3)

For the student teachers, the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online) become a 'signifier' (Lacan, 1977) of their progress and a manifestation of their teacher fantasies. For Lacan (1977) entry of the infant into the world of the Symbolic is a critical 'moment' in the construction of self; entry into 'a' language can and is repeated. This repetition propels the subject into a particular discursive

framing. The forceful coding of the Other 'overrides' all signification present, privileging certain meanings and totalising the ways in which experiences might be understood (Hanley, 2005).

The Master role is one, which the teacher educator is expected to occupy, engrained within the education system. This configuration positions the teacher educator as full of 'knowledge' and the student teacher as the 'empty vessel'. The teacher educator is the subject who is supposed to 'know' and the student teacher, the subject who is suppose not to 'know' – they feel a 'loss' or 'lack' and are searching for 'something else' to fulfil it. In taking up these familiar positions, both fulfil a fantasy and evoke an emotional response of perverse enjoyment.

As the narrative entries progressed, so did the student teachers' awareness of the Masters role, from and in a range of contexts. An example can be seen in Kate's anticipation of my perception of her during the 'teach task', "We had briefed one another several times, about what each other wanted to introduce, when we were going to do it and how, this was written in precise steps on our lesson plan for us and Charlotte to refer to..." (Data collection 7) In order for me to make a judgement upon how successful Kate's 'teach task' was against the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online), as a discursive frame, Kate signposts how she is meeting the 'signifier' - the QTS teachers' standards - within her lesson. Kate expected recognition for the extent to which she had demonstrated her competence, which in turn, she used to judge to what extent she progressed towards her teacher fantasy. This awareness of the Master's role extends to the school context, "I have tried to implement elements of the policy document but still feel like the children do not see me as a teacher in their context." (Data collection 8). Similarly, within data collection 9, Amy contemplates the role of the Other:

"Since coming to university, I have become increasingly aware that teaching is a 'contested' profession, most of which is subject to the scrutiny and expectations of stakeholders - the public and broader society... I must deliberate how I can best implement these into my practice and the effect such implementation may have...I am aware my practice must adhere to the government's agenda and the policies they implement...Such adherence to policies may mean some of my own principles and ideologies are compromised in order to correspond..."

The QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online) are a construct of a professional embodiment for stakeholders and subsequently for those who experience teacher education - a 'point de capiton' (Žižek, 2006). The pinning of the 'point de capiton' offers an interesting sense of how it functions forcefully in the social domain; a site of both 'lack' and possibility. It is a structure and hierarchy through which student teachers' fantasies are filtered. The Symbolic mandate of the Other is seemingly working to totalise the ideological field, pinning down meaning in a specific form, which determines criteria for success/failure. Against this totalisation of meaning, any preferences for privileging emotive relationships occupying their teacher fantasies, are detrimental for the student teachers' progress, unless they are able to attend to the requirements of the Master discourse alongside - this places the student teachers in a compromising position. Žižek (2006) suggests 'points de capiton' have a totalising effect by holding potentially disparate Symbolic networks together in a way which implies accord, which while meaningless in themselves, are regarded as relevant. Such examples signify practices thought important in teacher education, producing a mandate to which student teachers must respond, due to their immersion into an environment steeped in discourse.

### ***University***

The University discourse stands for the Higher Education Institution who establishes what student teachers are required to 'know'. In Lacan's explanation of the University discourse, he presents 'knowledge' as unnatural - artificial 'knowledge' - manufactured and designed to control the masses. In this sense, the student teachers' educational autobiographies have been governed by unnatural 'knowledge', as it has been used to subjugate the slave. This positioning requires the student teachers to empty "...themselves of any knowledge that might interfere with the knowledge in the discourse becoming an amorphous, non-articulated substance ... to be articulated by discourse." (Bracher, 1994: 109). The student teachers are produced as a divided subject because of this interpellation.

The University occupies a duplicitous 'safety' discourse for both the teacher educator and the student teacher. It gives the impression that if all of its rules, regulations,

principles and policies are followed by both, the student journey will inevitably be linear and unproblematic, resulting in the outcome of 'Outstanding' (Department for Education, 2014: online) for each student teacher who enrolls onto the programme. For example, the 'cultural myth' (Britzman, 2003) of the teaching practitioner as the subject presumed to 'know knowledge' produces desire, as it reveals what the student teachers 'lack', providing a model to follow. The student teachers believe the 'cure' for 'uncertainty' lies in their ability to obtain accurate 'knowledge' from teacher education. Anxiety is felt through their inability to acquire 'certainties' to the 'unknown'. For the teacher educator, who is not the 'all-knowing' subject the student teacher believes them to be, the fantasy of transference (Freud, 1914) covers over the 'gap', providing them with a sense of authority capable of inspiring student teachers.

Throughout the narrative entries, the student teachers indicate a desire to obtain 'knowledge', unquestioningly positioning themselves as such passive recipients. The 'knowledge' they long for 'fits' into the construction of 'knowledge' as unnatural - artificial 'knowledge' - manufactured and designed to control the masses. References to a desire to obtain a repertoire of measureable solutions - 'toolbox' strategies - to eradicate any struggle in practice, constructs the student teachers as yearning to 'master' a specific construction of artificial 'knowledge', recognisable from their educational autobiographies. They believe this will enable them to recreate classroom contexts, which appear 'stable' to all involved.

This discussion is most prevalent in data collection 8, where many of the student teachers construct behaviour management as a 'technical pursuit', to prevent or remove 'uncertainty' or the 'unknown' from the lived experience of classrooms. An example is Amy's narrative entry, where she explains, "Behaviour management strategies are a tool for teachers to help them control their class, providing guidelines on what to do in certain situations..." Amy's use of the phrase "...certain situations..." suggests an unconscious desire for them to be 'certain', when in fact the use of the 'toolbox' strategies are to combat just that – the 'uncertain':

"...many effective behaviour management strategies (e.g. clapping or hands up) which are used in schools were modelled...I felt I had something to go off...my feelings of anxiety subsided, as I had solutions to draw upon..."



(Amy, data collection 10)

The student teachers' desire to obtain University sanctioned 'knowledge', represented by the student teachers in these examples as 'toolbox' strategies, demonstrates not only their desire to conform, fulfilling the role of the subjugated slave, but highlights an increasing awareness of a need to 'play the game'. This is echoed in my story:

"By the end of my first placement, I became increasingly skilled at 'playing the game' (ironically as I had done in a real sense as a child), ensuring at the beginning of placements I was paying attention to key aspects of the class teachers' practice that had the most significant impact within the classroom environment. At times, I would find myself talking and behaving similarly to the class teachers I had been placed with, in order to aid the development of my relationships with their pupils. In addition to this, I began actively noticing priorities of both the school and university, ensuring I attended to these, as and when others observed me."

(Chapter 3)

The 'performances' in my lesson observations, were no better than my other lessons, they were different - designed to 'tick the boxes' of stakeholder priorities. Every other day the children received 'Outstanding' lessons, just a different 'version' of them; a 'version' of reality attending to their actual wants/needs/desires as much as it could do, within the confines of the discursive frameworks of the education sector.

### ***Hysteric***

Lacan's Hysteric discourse is concerned with the experiences and conflicting demands made of the alienated divided subject. In this discourse, the Master is questioned and the authoritarian discourse is disrupted. The Hysteric agent merely substitutes one Master for another in searching for a secure and stable identification. The student teachers begin to allude to 'something else' they need to 'acquire' to become and be a teaching practitioner, becoming frustrated with their inability to equip themselves for the lived experience of classrooms. Even though there is little the student teachers can do to avoid immersion into the world of the Symbolic, the

data suggests at times, the student teachers struggle to filter the rhetoric of recommendations, reaching points of perceived clarity, yet seemingly entering back into the struggle. This is evidence of a disconnection between their teacher fantasies and the expectations of the Master and University discourses.

For example, Kayley in data collection 3 expresses a belief that the government expects teaching practitioners to be 'strict' when disciplining pupils. Her perception of the Other's demands, directly conflict with her teacher fantasies of being a 'kind' teaching practitioner. Whilst she recognises a need to negotiate the Other's demands and find a "...balance..." the signification of the 'point de capiton' has force rather than meaning; there is an urgent need to act, understood more emphatically than what needs to be done (Hanley, 2005). However unsure she is in relation of how to act, nonetheless, she feels compelled to.

Within the data, the Hysteric is evident in moments where the student teachers appear to puncture the 'common sense' master/slave relationship. An example can be seen in data collection 9, when Charlie contemplates how the author of the 'text' she is examining, reveals a 'lack' of understanding and appreciation for the complexities involved in being a teaching practitioner "...exposing her lack of understanding of the issues of the schools in deprived areas and that pupils face..." (Data collection 9) Engagement with the 'text' prompts a shift in Charlie's thinking, "...my ideologies...do not equate to the same as stakeholders...will I be perceived as ineffective in my pursuit to transform and make a difference to children's lives?" Charlie recognizes a need to maintain a distance between the demands of the Other in order to allow "...teachers to anticipate and not become disillusioned... I regrettably concede it may be more difficult than I envisaged, maintaining my compassionate ethos in an environment where I am repeatedly told to 'toughen up' and focus on raising academic standards, not pupils' emotional needs. I feel very anxious about this. It is not a battle I anticipated facing." (Data collection 9)

The Hysteric discourse is also evident in the way in which the student teachers utilise language filtered through and by the discourses of the Master and University. According to Lacan (1977), this is inevitable and happened when they entered into language as infants in the 'mirror stage', as such, the student teachers are confined

by the language available to them to describe their educational experiences, within the past (educational autobiography), present (teacher education) and future (teacher fantasies). At the beginning of the unit, the student teachers were unaware that the language they used did not belong to them. Over time, they realised that by entering into the discursive framing of the profession, they adopt teacher fantasies that are not of their choosing, "As the course progresses, I find myself using language I wouldn't have done at the start. I wanted to be different than other teachers; more relatable...instead I feel I am tangled up in language everyone else uses with no real sense of who I am anymore..." (Amy, data collection 8)

In Žižek's (1989) view, people are being held in place by the way they are described by multiple voices within the Symbolic network. Therefore, the student teachers are always externally defined, only to be recognised by how successful they are, in complying with the Other's role determinations, such as those prescribed in the Master and University discourses. As the unit progressed, the student teachers began to acknowledge the Other and how 'borrowed' language was inevitably going to be part of their constructions. The student teachers could only define themselves in relation to the constraints they accepted themselves as having; in doing so, their sense of agency was modified against an emergent understanding of a new context and how they would be received by the Other. This entailed a challenging meeting of expectations as well as newly conceived agency. Agency on the part of the student teacher mingles with dependency and is shaped/shifted by the external demands encountered. The student teachers are used to conceptualising normative discourses, as influence pressing on the subject from the outside - as what subordinates. If the student teachers begin to understand discourses as forming the subject - providing the condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire - then normative discourses are not simply what we oppose but what we depend on for our existence.

For Žižek there is always 'something else' beyond a subject's reach that will excite them - a surplus beyond which they can express through language. Notions of the 'Outstanding' teaching practitioner continue to predominate teacher education, yet the student teachers and those who work within the education sector, are awash with diversity within these representations, which tend to offer conflicting images. It is a misrecognition to believe it is possible for the self to stand outside of the orbit of the

Other, as the self is 'borrowed' from the Other, although the work of the Imaginary disguises this. Teacher fantasies cannot be overcome, achieved or avoided. Mass participation in education means student teachers are essentially 'born' into education and as such, experience 'lack', which conditions the speaking subject. Working to compensate for the 'lack' is not only realisable through the orthodox codes of the Other, but via the more elusive qualities of the teaching practitioner (Hanley, 2005), which are encapsulated within the student teachers' fantasies. In seeking to appear competent, student teachers invest in a view of 'knowledge' that is stand-alone and self-sufficient, an infallible basis for classroom routines and procedures. Here the desire of the Hysteric might be directed at being an 'Outstanding' teaching practitioner, which each portion of authoritative new 'knowledge' promises, then ultimately fails to deliver, "The subject does not have to find the object of his desire ... He must on the contrary refind the object... Of course, he never does refind it, and this is precisely what the reality principle consists in. The subject never refinds... anything but another object that answers more or less satisfactorily to the needs in question..." (Lacan, 2000: 85).

### ***Analyst***

In the Analyst discourse, desire is the agent, whilst the Master is the 'loss' or 'lack'. Lacan argues the nature of the Analyst discourse is to rebel against 'common sense' and within these moments, new 'knowledge' is created and the Master discourse becomes transformed. Only in the Analyst's discourse does the agent resist new forms of 'certainty' – instead speaking from a position of acknowledged dividedness leading to a more exploratory and perceptive discursive attitude. The Analyst discourse is the enactment of the divided self, to produce new master signifiers by the subject. The student teacher becomes the Analyst when desire is mobilised, entering with the intention of discovering the unconscious forces interfering with conscious actions, or the 'gap' between them. For example, alternative systems of 'knowledge' may conflict with each other and cause disturbance to the subject. The Analyst addresses the subject with a view to identifying the Master discourses working through them. Through this process, a Master discourse can be revolutionised, turned over, as the analytic resolution works itself through, "Knowledge then, is placed in the centre, in the dock, by psychoanalytic experience." (Lacan, 2007: 30). Thus, the Analyst discourse requires the student teachers to

recognise discourses and the narratives they 'story' about themselves are not fully within their control, rather it requires them to search for the underlying 'truth' of a message rather than its overt content. In this way, it is oppositional to authoritarian normative discourses, where overt content is reified and absolutized. The Analyst discourse can be considered as the most empowering, as it sees the subject's fantasies and anxieties as important in the experience.

Within the data, many of the student teachers discuss the act of revising stories. They articulate that this has had an impact upon their teacher fantasies, "How we choose to revise our stories says even more about the kind of teacher I am developing into, although I recognise this is constantly changing...." (Charlie, data collection 6) Charlie appreciates how each voice, whether it be in narrative or dialogical form, was different due to the subjective nature of reality, recognising the struggle experienced whilst engaged with the process. She explained she had been "...forced to reflect upon my initial feelings...then consider the opposing view. The strengths of the sessions are they always challenge my initial thoughts and I leave considering a new point or some new information that has been brought to my attention...I have revisited memories that at times, I have chosen to forget or ignore..." (Data collection 6) Indicated in her wording, is that it is possible for people to choose to "...forget and ignore..." memories which have had a negative emotional impact, suggesting it is possible to 'control' what a person brings into consciousness and subsequently chooses to share. Kate has a similar perspective, "The focus on our educational autobiographies has unearthed memories from the past that have potentially shaped, not only the teacher that we are aspiring to become, but also my sense of self fundamentally." (Data collection 6)

The act of re-storying became for many of the student teachers, a coping mechanism for dealing within the 'unknown', reminiscent of my experiences, "They were an opportunity to talk through issues at school, I felt unable to discuss with those within the context itself." (Chapter 3) Unfortunately, the 'space' to contemplate reality is something, which often remains non-existent within school contexts. As I had chosen to pursue teacher education due to the positive experience within my educational autobiography, I had pre-constructed ideas of what time within the school context should be like and the reality proved a disappointment. The telling

and repetition of such stories might be an indicator of a form of resistance; in attempts to insert a fixed image we 'block off' the possibility of building memories in a more creative way (Ricoeur, 1981: 249). The reworking of a memory into a story is not the memory of a linear narrative, rather its functionality is in its probing, which creates something new, a present-day building of the past - subsequent significance is grasped retrospectively. The 'truth' of experience is processed through the subjective story frame being utilised, through which reality appears to be structured. Unearthing memories and the construction of these into a story appear fundamental, as Britzman (2003) argues, memories affect both the present and past reportage of the self:

"One key difficulty is that school memories do not just invoke relations with authority but also repeat one's own childhood helplessness, dependency and desire to please. This strange combination means that reflecting on ones learning seems necessary to pass through these unbidden repetitions of love, hate and ambivalence that make the transference, reminding us of the very earliest scenes of education, learning for love, even as we encounter ideas and selves that seem far removed in time." (Page 760)

The student teachers' awareness of the Other significantly increased as the unit progressed. Towards the end of the narrative entries, the student teachers move towards an understanding that engagement with the unit prompted them to consider a range of perspectives. Many of the student teachers site the dialogic nature of the unit as being responsible for this shift, recognising how "Working with my peers has allowed me to think of differing viewpoints..." (Amy, data collection 6) While other student teachers have "...found mine [teacher fantasies] being shaped by them." (Sarah, data collection 6). Many of the student teachers commented on the impact such a destabilisation had in other contexts too, "...the way in which I analyse everyday life occurrences and interactions in relationships have profoundly changed..." (Kate, data collection 6) The student teachers developed a deeper-rooted understanding of the subjective nature of reality and began to question said 'truths'. For the student teachers to be aware of themselves as a self-conscious being they needed to be able to observe another self-conscious being, to see what self-consciousness is like.

For Lacan (1977) we are all motivated by desire, a desire that always mistakes its object. The narrative entries were never able to capture where the student teachers were in reality, merely 'holding' the student teachers' fantasies in place, for a specific purpose, in a moment of time. The stories articulated never truly pinned down life for inspection but rather stimulated it for future growth and thus, narratives are stimulators of desire through which life unfolds. It is within the restorying of the narrative entries, which provided the motivation for the student teachers' fantasies to renew - they found pleasure in repeating. The unit encouraged the student teachers to begin to resist any sense that reality can be successfully processed and fully accounted for, through a structured filter. Successive attempts to revise the filter merely alerted them to alternative failings. For many, they began to reach a point where they were not so much concerned with getting the 'correct version', rather focused on what can be learned through making successive substitutions of the stories told. It is through this, they learnt something about the Real:

“In the first move the Real is an impossible hard core which we cannot confront directly, but only through the lens of a multitude of symbolic fictions, virtual formations. In a second move, this very hard core is purely virtual, actually non-existent, an X which can be reconstructed only retrospectively, from the multitude of symbolic formations which are...all that there actually is...” (Žižek, 2006: 24)

The sense of agency afforded within the Analyst discourse, to the student teachers, requires the teacher educator's familiar role of Master to repress. The student teachers began to locate their teacher fantasies whilst the teacher educator simultaneously located their inner imposter. In doing so, the teacher educator experiences anxiety due to having to shift from the Master position, creating opportunities for student teachers to uphold agency and new 'knowledge'.

## **Summary**

It is this study's suggestion, that teacher education has a responsibility to create space in which teacher educators draw student teachers' attention to various voices – their own, each other's and that of the Other. As the student teachers began to realise the impossibility of a full reconciliation between these voices, they moved towards acceptance that the representations on offer would never be complete,

merely partial 'versions'. Towards the end of the unit, for most there was recognition there was never going to be a 'correct version' of their teacher fantasies. The student teachers' engagement with narrative writing was an ongoing permanent vehicle of self-realisation - a never-ending re-storying of the past - an impossible attempt to grasp reality. The 'cover stories' expressed through language provided by the Master and University discourses, such as the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online), acted as camouflage for phenomena, which inevitably remained complex and irreconcilable. The only consensual frameworks that seemed to claim a unifying agenda, were those derived from the Other. Such instruments succeeded in hegemonic control, in they appeared to achieve governance through 'common sense', strangely but seemingly, accepted by those within teacher education, as unquestionable. The student teachers' conception of what constitutes an 'Outstanding' teaching practitioner, is a function of how the student teachers understood elements of their social participation whilst engaging with the unit.

As the student teachers continue to negotiate their way through teacher education and entry into the profession, they will grapple with the demands of the Other, assuming a greater feeling of 'control' as time goes on. This will continue to involve borrowing from the Other's discourses to mask struggles in meeting their teacher fantasies. The unit became a space for the student teachers to contemplate and as the unit progressed, the student teachers generated stories about all of the aforementioned, but also began to detect and examine 'lack' within those stories - the unit in this way became a Lacanian experience.



## **Chapter 8**

### **A contribution to knowledge**

#### **Originally written 2018**

My intention was to create space within the unit, for the student teachers to explore how experiences continually influenced their existing and developing teacher fantasies, whilst unearthing existing tensions. Although the data revealed many aspects of the student teachers' fantasies, it 'opened up' the study to consider other aspects of 'the personal', revealed through the student teachers' data as well as my own. The unit was fruitful in encouraging the student teachers to attend to the 'uncertainty' of the emotional world of teaching, constructing teacher education as an interrupted and precarious journey, fraught with emotional significance. Examination of such, alongside stakeholder demands, became an integral yet unanticipated factor for the student teachers, which initially added to their anxiety. Understandably, the student teachers were keen to present themselves as 'fitting' with normative discourses prevailing, thereby adopting "...a stable and positive identity obtained through identification with an existing socio-political order..." (Biesta, 2011: 145), reaffirming 'cultural myths' associated with the role (Britzman, 2003).

Lacan's Four Discourses, allowed me to tentatively 'bring together' struggles experienced by the student teachers. The use of Lacan's theory should not to be interpreted as a 'remedy' or 'cure' to struggles experienced and explored through the unit/study, rather it offered an alternative perspective to challenge existing understandings and generate new ones. Lacan's Four Discourses of the Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst, allowed me to analyse some of the complexities of the social world the student teachers occupy. From Master discourses of politically engendered aims, to the University discourse enactment of the Master; to the split subject of the Hysteric discourse and the recognition of individual desire in the Analyst discourse, the student teachers' experience of the unit was radically different depending upon which discourse was valorised. The example of the student teachers desire to become and be an 'Outstanding' teaching practitioner, denoted by the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education,

2014: online), was one of the examples of how a discourse (in this case the Master) can continue to predominate teacher education, becoming 'signifiers' (Lacan, 1977) of the student teachers' progress. The QTS teachers' standards were conceptualised as a construct of professional embodiment by the student teachers. There are an infinite number of potential 'signifiers', which I was unable to attend to within the confines of the study, yet the focus on the QTS teachers' standards (Department for Education, 2014: online) as part of Lacan's Master discourse, provides an example of the forceful influence they have upon the student teachers' conceptualisations of teacher education and fantasies.

The student teachers purposefully grappled with the diverse representations on offer, destabilising reality, continuously dismantling and restructuring the prevalent Symbolic order guiding normative discourses. The discussion around the pinning of a 'point de capiton' (Žižek, 2006) offered an interesting sense of how they function forcefully in the social domain, a site of both 'lack' and possibility, through which teacher fantasies are filtered. Throughout the student teachers struggled to filter the rhetoric of recommendations, reaching points of perceived clarity, yet seemingly entering back into the struggle. Eventually, they began to conceptualise normative discourses as forming the subject, providing the condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, rather than as an influence pressing on the subject from the outside. One of the tenets of Lacan's work lies in the notion of problematizing 'I': it is not a straightforward identity, as the subjective self does not know itself. We can only understand the 'mirror stage' as an 'identification', namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an 'ideal image' (Lacan, 2007). Lacan warns to be "...wary of the image..." (ibid), emphasising we should never trust perceived reality, as reality is constructed of fragments of contextually bound referential experiences constantly shaping and shifting.

Throughout the unit, the student teachers experienced a journey defined by a feeling of 'loss' and 'lack', generated from the familiarity of their educational autobiographies, to acquire 'something else' – their teacher fantasy. The student teachers' search for 'something else' continued throughout the unit, fragmentations being temporally located within others (university and school

context) and 'textual' representations. 'Textual' representations would not have had the same appeal and influence over the student teachers' fantasies, unless the leading role had embodied the qualities conceived by the Other as the 'ideal image' (Lacan, 1977). The 'ideal image' portrayed by the representations, were always unrealistically beyond the reach of the student teachers, yet remained within their teacher fantasies, due to their symptomatic entry into language during Lacan's 'mirror stage' (2006). This study concludes by acknowledging both the teacher educator and student teacher as incomplete subjects.

The student teachers began believing their teacher educator was in a privileged position in relation to 'knowing knowledge'; believing that the 'cure' for 'uncertainty' within classroom contexts, lay in their ability to 'obtain' 'knowledge' from their teacher education. For the teacher educator, who is not the 'all-knowing' subject the student teacher believes them to be, the transference masks the feeling of 'lack', providing them with a sense of authority capable of inspiring student teachers (Freud, A. 1930). The unit/study challenged this prominent construction, detracting away from the emphasis placed on the production of 'knowledge', which can be commercially exploited. It encouraged the student teachers to consider the ways in which engagement with 'knowledge' can enhance individual development, within sets of broadly conceived educational aims (Harris, 2005).

The student teachers struggled with different constructions of 'knowledge' at various points, with the focus predominantly upon 'toolbox' strategies. The student teachers moved towards a realisation, that even when they acquired 'toolbox' strategies to render 'uncertainty' as tolerable, this had minimal impact upon the anxiety experienced (Freud, 1914). The desire for 'toolbox' strategies to overcome distortions within reality, suggested a desire to escape anxiety (Williams & Osborne, 1983; Gilmore & Anderson, 2010.) The unit/study concludes by suggesting the student teachers acknowledged a necessity for them to hold a state of paradox between 'knowing' and not 'knowing' without necessarily resolving conflict, whereas, in some circumstances the 'not knowing' was tolerated until generative learning could emerge. The study situates anxiety as a necessary grounding for productive learning outcomes (Gilmore & Anderson, 2016). Whilst students may be less likely to 'sign up' to tackle difficult

‘knowledge’ (Brown & Murphy, 2012), once they arrive at the university, there is potential for them to engage with just that, providing a facilitating space for ‘working through’ is created (Freud, 1913).

The narrative entries were never able to capture where the student teachers were in reality, they merely held the student teachers’ fantasies in place momentarily, for a specific purpose. The stories articulated never truly pinned down life for inspection but rather stimulated it for future growth and thus, for Lacan, narratives are stimulators of desire through which life unfolds (1977). The rewriting of the narrative entries, provided motivation for the student teachers’ fantasies to renew – the student teachers found pleasure in repeating. The unit encouraged the student teachers to begin to resist any sense that reality could be successfully processed and fully accounted for, through a structured filter. Successive attempts to revise the filter merely alerted them to alternative failings. For many, they began to reach a point where they were not so much concerned with presenting a ‘correct version’ of the story, rather focused on what could be learned through making successive substitutions of the stories told; it is through this process that they learnt something about Lacan’s Real (2006).

Since reaching the final stages of the study, I have considered my role as the teacher educator and doctoral student, in relation to Lacan’s Four Discourses (2007). When considering the journey of becoming and being a doctoral student, it is possible for me to pinpoint moments where my experience ‘fits’ within Lacan’s Four Discourses.

Embarking upon my doctoral studies, I would often find myself fixating on one of the central tenets of research at this level; the idea that doctoral students’ research must make a ‘contribution to knowledge’. I began Phase A of my doctoral study within the Master discourse, positioning myself as an ‘empty vessel’ seeking the elusive ‘knowledge’ from more knowledgeable others. The feelings of ‘loss’/‘lack’ derived from my perception that a gap existed between what I already knew and what I needed to know, in order to reach a defined ‘end point’, mobilised both desire to continue and feelings of anxiety within these early stages.

As I entered into the early phases of Phase B, the University discourse enabled me to temporarily find comfort in the notion that if all of the doctoral study rules, regulations, principles and policies were followed, the journey to such an 'end point' would be relatively linear and unproblematic. The University discourse valorised the fantasy of a beautifully red leather bound book, with Dr Charlotte Booth in gold lettering down the spine, which remained one of the main drivers to see the study through.

Within the later stages of Phase B, the Hysteric discourse of the split subject protesting and objecting to the Master became more prominent. Despite a drive to remain compliant with the University discourse, I was beginning to disrupt the Master. Even though within Chapter 7, I articulate how I perceived the earlier stages of analysing the data as the most anxiety provoking, due to the 'uncertainty' and 'unknown' of how the study would progress, in retrospect this was not the case. The later stages, where I began to exercise intellectual protest to the theoretical material I was working with, was the most anxiety provoking, yet crucial.

The Analyst discourse was exemplified in the continuous rewriting of the thesis. Despite reaching a near submission point and anticipating my viva, I remained absolute in my intentions to depict the journey of the study. The continuous search for 'something else' has been exasperating, as I grappled with the desire to 'contribute to knowledge', which haunted the whole process. I admit to deleting passages and sentences that inferred preference for a particular interpretation on countless occasions, attempting to 'open up' new possibilities for analysis and the creation of new 'knowledge'. I actively avoided representing myself as 'definitive' or 'victorious' on paper, although I inevitably and necessarily failed to do so; a necessary admission considering the theoretical orientation of the study.

In my experience as a teacher educator, anxiety was felt most when occupying the Master position. The pressure to attend to the requirements of the University, work within the structures expected of me and reaffirm the 'common sense' master/slave relationship, led to anxiety on a regular basis. In those magical moments of Hysteria, as a teacher educator, I felt obliged to return to the master/slave relationship, as it is what the University expects, in order to maintain

control and authority. Bureaucracy provokes the anxiety but satisfies any desire for structure. Similarly, to the student teachers, a teacher educator is a divided subject, yet this cannot be revealed to neither the University nor the student teachers.

Due to the nature of the psychoanalytical theory explored, teacher education and its effect upon student teachers as subjects, is unimaginably complex and impossibly challenging to make determinate claims about. Despite my intentions for the student teachers to become comfortable with the 'unknown', I have unconsciously fought against this myself; perhaps my saving grace is my acknowledgement that I continue to be disturbed by the 'version' of reality this study now presents. Perhaps a near constant state of 'being troubled', whilst somewhat exhausting and filled with anxiety, has allowed me to temper the concluding thoughts of this study in a way I can live with. I have, I hope for the most part, avoided making 'grand' claims or proclamations that this study has the capacity to 'reinvent' teacher education, if all facets of it are employed. This realisation has to some extent, curbed the anxiety I have felt through the production of the thesis, up until these final stages. I have concluded that the most appropriate claim is that I arrive at this point with a completely different perception of teacher education and 'version' of my educational autobiography. In light of this, I feel the study 'contributes to knowledge' in the following ways:

In the context of my work as a teacher educator, the impact will be more subtle. It is within the intricacies of my practice; the influence of the study will be most felt. The dissonance created in quiet and relatively minor flections within sessions, will provide a necessary line of disorientation for the student teachers. The meandering indulged in within sessions, was and will continue to be, a necessary and wholly appropriate departure from normative discourses. After all, meanders, whether in spoken or written form, are inevitable once one attempts to pinpoint in language what they are trying to communicate because they become constrained by their constructions. Lacan tells us it is impossible to capture the complexity of social phenomena, as any attempt is an intrinsic reduction, thus transgressing boundaries seems impossible to avoid (Lacan, 2007). As much as we would like, as teacher educators, to be able to capture a psychoanalytically informed

awareness, our ability to do so was/is impossible. We will never be able to grasp and grapple with it, as we are all dependent upon ‘uncertainties’ to stimulate desire (Lacan, 2007).

Undoubtedly, the focus of this study will continue to inform and influence changes to the unit, which continues to run to this present day, as well as others within the realm of Teaching Studies, improving the quality of the student teachers’ provision. The study has occupied the parameters of the Higher Education Institutions SLTA plan, attending to Principle 2. This outlined that the Higher Education Institution would provide an innovative, flexible, enterprising and internationalised curriculum; one of the standards states programmes will enable “...students to develop their intellectual powers, creativity, independent judgement, critical self-awareness, imagination, and personal skills that will clearly identify them as [institutions] graduates, global learners and as world class professionals.” (Institution SLTA 2.3L: online) This thesis suggests emotionality is an integral part of the teacher education experience for student teachers.

The study contributes to the perspective that a psychoanalytical approach can contribute to effective academic professional formation (Britzman and Pitt, 1996; Moore, 2006). I believe a combination of the two fields of psychoanalysis and education provides a richer understanding of the role of anxiety, in stimulating productive and generative learning outcomes, crucial to student teachers’ development. I believe this study is distinctive in that it presents an example of the student teacher journey, offering a unique insight into the experience of a unit within this Higher Education Institution. Whilst the nature of the study denotes its ‘specificity’ within its contextual boundaries, I believe aspects of it may be applicable to other teaching education contexts, as Higher Education Institutions seek to find invigorating alternatives to the dominant neo-liberalised movement. Although the current neoliberal climate predominantly focuses upon universities as producers of ‘knowledge’, enhancing individual and collective human capital, positively affecting economic growth and development (Patrik, 2013), I believe there is potential to work within the structures normative discourses uphold.

In regards to further research opportunities, there are many to consider for the imminent future. The six student teachers, who were participants within the study,

have recently graduated from the Higher Education Institution. As part of their curriculum, they have engaged with two further Teaching Studies units, completing similar narrative entry submissions to the electronic depositories. There is scope to use this data, with their consent, for further exploration around how teacher fantasies develop as the student teachers progress through teacher education. I have also considered how I might research into my developing role as a teacher educator, further exploring the struggles I experience alongside student teachers, including the development of my teacher fantasies.

Whilst it has been an interrupted and precarious journey, fraught with emotional significance for all involved, I have reached a point where I feel strongly that however normative discourses impinge; we need to defend what we believe about education. All I could ever have hoped to achieve was to illuminate one 'version' of my reality within teacher education within a much wider context. I have sought and necessarily failed to represent the lived experience of student teachers, describing their world from a particular perspective predominated by my positionality. If I were to return to the thesis, even within the near future, any interpretation made over its contents would inevitably have changed; yet, the emotionality attached to its production will not falter, as this chapter becomes an integral one within my educational autobiography.



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